

Readings on Poverty Politics and Development

**edited by
kamla bhasin
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**Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**



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August 1980

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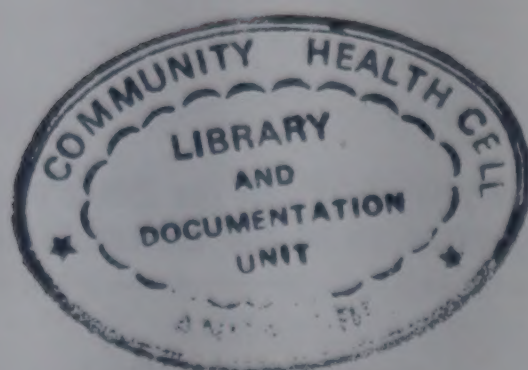
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Contents

Preface
Acknowledgements
Introduction

Section-I On Poverty, Aid and Development

A Workers' Speech
to a Doctor

Brecht, Berthold 3

1 On Rural Development

Nyerere, Julius.K. 5

2 Development Reconsidered

Haque, W; Mehta, N;
Rahman, A; and
Wignaraja, P. 12

3 Global Interconnections

'Excerpts' 17

4 Six Myths of Hunger

Collins, Joseph and
Lappe, Francis Moore 32

5 Politics of Charity

Lissner, Jorgan 42

Section-II Asian Scene

6 Poverty and Landlessness
in Rural Asia - A Summary

ILO 51

7 A Quarter Century of Anti-
Rural Development

Haque, W; Mehta, N;
Rahman, A; and
Wignaraja, P. 56

8 The Technological Roots of
Indian Poverty

Reddy, A.K.N. 61

9 The Green Revolution in
Thanjavur

Berg, Lissa and
Berg, Lasse 66

10 The Underdevelopment of the
Village in Sri Lanka

Balasuriya, Tissa 70

11 South Indian Plantation
Workers in Sri Lanka

Dawood, Nawaz 76

12 Aid to Bangladesh; For
Better or Worse?

Scott, Michael 81

13	From Mutual Aid Teams to the Commune	Obaidullah, A.Z.M.	99
14	Exploitation of the Thai Peasantry	Turton, Andrew	107
15	The Peasant and the White Man	Srinawk, Khamsing	112
16	Long Record of Anti Peasant Policies in the Philippines	'Peasant Kit'	119
Section III			
The Question of Women			
17	Participation of Women in Development	Bhasin, Kamla	126
18	Women in north Vietnam	Lee Soo Jin and Daniel, Kiran	135
19	The Husband is the Employer	Ahmed, Wajihuddin	137
Section-IV			
Development Strategies—Some Case Studies			
20	Alternative Development Strategies - A Look at Some Micro Experiments	Sethi, Harsh	144
21	Fishermen's Cooperative in Marianad, Kerala	Kurien, John	156
22	The Forest Cover	Mishra, Anupam	160
23	A Peasant Movement in Maharashtra - Its Development and Perspective	Mies, Maria	165
24	Basic Service Delivery in "Under developing" Countries : A view from Gonashasthaya Kendra	Choudhary, Dr. Zafrullah	179
25	Learning Through Struggle : A Malaysian Kampong Against Pollution	Tuckwell, Sue	200
26	Decentralisation and Self-Reliance is an Agrarian Economy : An Analysis Based upon Agricultural Cooperatives in north Viet Nam.	Bhaduri, Amit	205
27	People's Organisation : Transforming a "Sheet of Loose Sand" in China	FAO Study Mission	212
28	Small Farmers of Nepal Show the Way	Bhasin, Kamla and Malik, Baljit	221
29	Three Schools of Rural Reconstruction	Desai, A.R.	230

Section-V
Education, Interaction, and Training

30	The Workshop as a Moment in a Process of Political Education	IDAC Document	237
31	Notes from a Shibir - A camp organised by 'Bhoomi Sena'	Sethi, Harsh	242
32	The Role and Training of Change Agents	Bhasin, Kamla	245
33	Criticism and Self-Criticism	Bhasin, Kamla	252
34	Education or Manipulation	Bhave, Vinoba	262

Preface

"I have a sharp sword of ideas and feelings in my hand"

Participants in the FFHC/AD
Regional Change Agents Training
Programme, March-May 1978

In 1975, at the request of a number of national and local organizations in Asia, FFHC/Action for Development initiated a series of training programmes for field level rural development workers(1). The emphasis of these programmes was on helping field workers, generally already training in technical areas, to improve their ability to communicate and work with communities and their capacity to analyse socio-economic and political structures and dynamics at both micro and macro levels.

In order to stimulate participants to reflect about development in a broader and deeper way than they normally do in their day-to-day work, the coordinator of the programme collected and prepared a selection of reading material on a wide range of subjects. This material was distributed not only to participants but to many organizations and groups in Asia as well, and requests for copies began to multiply. When the flow of requests overpowered our capacity to respond with stencils and photocopies, we decided to publish this Book of Readings on Poverty and Development. The expenses of final editing and printing have been covered by a grant from Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, the German FFHC/AD Committee.

This volume includes most of the articles used in the Regional Change Agents Training Programmes, with some additional material. In putting together the collection, the editors looked for material written in a relatively simple style and language by people who had some direct experience of field work; articles which were analytical and, what is more, stimulated more analysis and questioning on the part of readers. Some of the papers had to be rewritten in order to render them more accessible, and this may be a useful reminder to researchers who care about the impact of their work at the field level.

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- (1) The methodology and content of these programmes are documented in two reports: Bhasin, Kamla, "Participatory Training for Development", April-May 1976, and Bhasin, Kamla, "Breaking Barriers, A South Asian Experience of Training for Participatory Development", March-May 1978
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This Book of Reading, is intended for people who are directly involved in development programmes and who do not have access to all the magazines and books in which such articles are published, nor the time to go through them. Although it can be used directly only by those who have a reading knowledge of English, we hope that readers who feel some of the articles would be of use to non-English speaking workers will take the initiative to translate them into local languages and to promote discussion on the issues they raise. We would be very glad to be kept informed about such initiatives.

August, 1980

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Introduction

vimala r.

kamla bhasin

The starting of the Development Decades in the sixties meant an explicit recognition of the partial/complete failure of the well tried developmental theories and strategies. We do seem to be caught up in a paradoxical situation. While in most countries the G.N.P. per capita marched ahead, the indicators of poverty and unemployment showed no signs of regressing. What seemed like an era of a new dawn with the demise of colonialism in Asia, has slowly turned into a nightmare where feverish attempts to eke out even a miserable existence are no longer certain.

Does this imply that the Asian Nations have not progressed? After all the infrastructure has been 'developed'; new factories have come up; we now have universities, medical institutions, atomic reactors and the like to convince ourselves that we are developing into powerful, modern nations. And yet, the doubt remains.

And so, the attempts at development have been continuously reviewed and reanalysed. Unfortunately these attempts have been mainly by theoreticians, far removed from the harsh reality of the peasant, the worker, the tribal. What seems to be required is the development of a new social praxis, a theorisation that would have implications for the concrete.

Fortunately, we are not the only questioning concerned individuals. Those engaged in meaningful social practice, as activists for the government, on a voluntary basis, as members of political parties, or as socially concerned and sensitive individuals are no longer silent. They seek many forums to express their views, share their experiences, attempt collective theorisation etc. to sharpen both their understanding and practice. To repeat: the critical new element is the accent on practice.

This volume represents a hesitant attempt in this direction. It is directed towards the field worker - wherever he/she is. It is an attempt to systematically link up the major issues in the 'development game' and represent them for discussion.

For analytical convenience, the problem has been broken up into a number of components.

Conceptual Problems of Development

What is development? Its nature needs to be clearly defined and its implications need to be carefully noted. Very briefly, just any change from a state A to a state B cannot be called development. Does progress mean the establishment of giant industries at the cost of thousands of tribals rendering them landless, homeless and unemployed? Few, would agree with such a view.

It is now being increasingly recognised that poverty is unequal access to resources, to levers of social, economic and political power; it is unequal participation in making decisions which determine the direction societies take. Based on this understanding of poverty, development can only be a more equal distribution of resources, tilting the power relationships in favour of the poor, empowering the poor to participate in decision making. It must be clearly recognised that tube-wells, tractors and industries by themselves do not develop a society. We have to continuously ask the questions:- Who operates them? Who benefits from them? Do they strengthen the present unjust structure? etc.

Unless the people are involved in a conscious reshaping of their own present to create their own future - there can be no development. Progress in this sense implies not only material accumulation but also a reduction of inequality through an interaction and participative process. An attempt has been made to discuss the interlinkages between poverty, aid and development in the first section of this volume.

Potentials for Change

To develop a developmental strategy (ies) we not only need to know the present better, we need to know the attempts at changing it. Towards this end, it becomes necessary to study the efforts of all change agents- governmental and non-governmental. It is through a rigorous analysis of their attempts - their successes and failures in their entirety that new theoreisation is possible. Section II, III and IV of the volume present articles and excerpts towards this end. If the official efforts seem to be neglected, it is not because they are unimportant, but because they have been presented many times over.

In that sense, it is the non-governmental organisations on which we have concentrated. Where do the voluntary agencies fit in and what is their role as change agents?

The voluntary agency will clearly have to define its role. Does it seek to function as an extension of the government? Does it plan to operate within the parameters of the given political structure? Is it prepared to transcend this structure? If so, what kind of change would it be satisfied with and be working towards? A clarity on these basic issues is critical.

None of these questions can be understood without an understanding of their internal structure and their relationship with their social milieu, their strategies and their implications.

We have voluntary groups which have chosen different entry points - health and nutrition, education, technology, handicrafts etc. In all cases it soon becomes evident that partial, sectoral strategies can have only limited effect. Here the voluntary agency either transcends its own aims and structure, or falls by the wayside.

You cannot improve the health status of your people without ensuring them food. And food in our societies is critically dependent upon access to the utilisation of productive assets. This invariably leads to conflict and politics. Unless the agency is interested in 'developing' the poor - delivering them from their measly existence by doses of aid in the form of food and nutrition, it very soon has to grapple with the issue of organising the people.

The role we visualise for any agency involved in social intervention is that of a catalyst - assisting the marginalised masses in their struggle against stagnation and dependancy. Aided development can at best create show pieces, whether of villages or of nations. Undoubtedly

this role is the easier one - of transferring some resources from the rich to some of the poor. As it happens, charity is no solution and leaves the masses as far away from their cherished goals as before.

The problems faced by the catalyst are far more complex. Should one accept aid? If so - how much? and in what form? All aid reduces the manoeuvrability of both the organisation and its cadres. It constantly poses the problem of alienation from the people. To promote a self-reliant model requires taking the people into confidence, helping them reflect upon their circumstances, building up foci for action on the basis of this collective theorisation. One can only build upon what one has, and the philosophy of 'From the masses to the masses' has shown that it can work.

One final point. There is very often a tendency to counterpose voluntary and official efforts. To our mind the distinction can very often be misleading. Unless the dominant state power is anti-development, in which case there is no alternative to a social revolution, there are areas of meaningful cooperation. What is important is the development of a philosophy of action, and the continuous attempt to practice it.

From Interaction to Co-ordination

Having developed a social philosophy of praxis is only a necessary but insufficient condition for development. Isolated efforts have little meaning beyond providing examples. We still face the problem of repeating past errors, going through costly exercises of learning by only doing and as a result very often get frustrated and seek alternative avenues for personal salvation.

Fortunately this danger has been recognised and particularly in the last decade there have been many attempts to provide a solution. The many strategies followed have been more frequent meetings, workshops, and seminars at one level; the publication of newsletters and journals at another. The most hopeful sign however is in the increased mobility of social activists, not only in formal forums, but also in the form of personal visits and convival evaluations of each others' efforts.

There have also been sporadic attempts at setting up documentation and coordination centres to give a focus to the increased mobility and debate. One critical lesson drawn from this activity is the need for trained cadre to help sharpen these trends and evolve higher organisational forms. This activity, unfortunately, is too recent to permit any meaningful conclusions. But what is clear is that the limits to individual/isolated group efforts have been clearly recognised.

The task, therefore is to move ahead, to continue to meet, exchange experiences, collectively reflect, go back into the field, and slowly develop consolidated and coordinated action over wider fronts, so that the largest number of struggling people become involved in the effort to define and create a meaningful future.

The last section of this volume explores avenues for interaction, education and training.

This volume is a humble effort in this direction. It draws upon many such experiences and reflections. Our hope is that it can contribute towards sharpening the existing debate and help create space for further action.

SECTION - I

ON POVERTY, AID AND DEVELOPMENT

A Workers' Speech to a Doctor

berthold brecht

We know what makes us ill
When we are ill we are told
That it's you who will heal us.

For ten years, we are told
You learned healing in fine schools
Built at the people's expense
And to get your knowledge
Spent a fortune.
So you must be able to heal.

Are you able to heal?

When we come to you
Our rags are torn off us
And you listen all over our naked body.
As to the cause of our illness
One glance at our rags would
Tell you more. It is the same cause that wears
Our bodies and our clothes.

The pain in our shoulder comes
You say, from the damp; and this is also the reason
So tell us:
Where does the damp come from?

Too much work and too little food
Make us feeble and thin.
Your prescription says:
Put on more weight.
You might as well tell a bullrush
Not to get wet.

How much time can you give us?
We see: one carpet in your flat costs
The fees you earn from
Five thousand consultations.

You'll no doubt say
You are innocent. The damp patch
On the wall of our flats
Tells the same story.

On Rural Development

julius k. nyerere

Under the economic, political, and social systems at present operating, the world's people are divided into two groups; those with access to its resources, and those without access. Those with access to existing resources - the rich - can afford to invest heavily in the production of greater wealth, so they get richer. The poor have very little to invest; their productivity consequently remains low, and they remain poor. Worse still, the market laws of supply and demand mean that the wealth of the few diverts the world's resources - including the labour of others - from meeting the real but ineffective demand of the poor into satisfying the luxury desires of the rich. Land and labour are used to cultivate grapes instead of grain; palaces are built instead of houses for the workers and peasants.

The automatic market tendency to favour the rich is aggravated by the fact that political power also flows naturally to the "haves" of the world - the educated and those persons or societies which have inherited public or private capital. The result is that publicly produced wealth also benefits the wealthy more than the poor, accrues to the towns rather than to the rural areas, and serves the educated rather than those without academic opportunity or ability. We are all more aware of those problems which affect us than we are of the problems which affect others, and the word "need" is very elastic. Those of us in Government are likely to be closer to the man who "needs" a second car or a University education, than we are to the man whose "need" is for shoes to protect his bare feet or the ability to read and write.

Until now we have, in general, been trying to tackle the problem of poverty - including rural poverty - by directing resources into the existing system and hoping that it will "trickle down" to the poor. Some of it does. When a factory is started, there is always some unemployed person who gets a badly needed job. When more productive seeds are made available to a farmer and his output goes up, he may give a temporary job to his landless neighbour. And so on.

But the major benefit of the new investment stays where it began - with the man who already has, and in proportion to the wealth which he already has. The poor benefit - or sometimes suffer - from the side effects; or they receive the crumbs left over. Even nationally, the net result of a new private investment, described as an asset in the fight against poverty, is frequently a large foreign exchange commitment for the payment of interest and profit, and also the destruction of indigenous and widespread local production systems. Similarly, giving higher education to the wrong person in an exploitative system does not result in the uplifting of the poor, but in their greater exploitation by a more skilled operator !

Rural Development Requires Political Decisions

The lesson to be drawn is surely that fighting poverty is not just a question of production techniques and capital investment. It is a highly political topic. It involves matters relating to the existing wealth distribution and the present location of power within nations and between nations.

Rural Development, and what is called the Basic Needs Approach, has become the fashion among intellectuals concerned with development matters and international assistance Agencies like the World Bank, as well as among the Aid Donor countries. Most of the developing countries also espouse this strategy in words. I believe this new fashion is to be welcomed, provided we do not allow it to become a fetish, or an incantation, and thus ignore its practical implications.

For the root of world poverty, as well as the mass of it, lies in the rural areas. Urban poverty is more obvious -- the slums and degradation of some towns in the developing countries force themselves upon the notice of the richest citizen and upon the most casual visitor from other states. But the bulk of the slum inhabitants and the beggars on our streets have migrated to towns because they are pushed out of the rural areas by landlessness, joblessness, and hopelessness. It is therefore in the rural areas that we can most effectively tackle the long-term problems of urban poverty, as well as dealing with the mass of misery which now exists unseen - but not unfelt by its sufferers. Trying to deal with mass poverty by improving conditions and providing work in the towns simply attracts more and more people from the depressed rural areas. You could just as well try to solve the world problems of poverty by allowing the people of the poor Third World nations to migrate to the industrialised countries.

An effective attack on world poverty can only be made by going direct to the rural areas and dealing with the problems there. We have to deal with them in the light of the objective. And that objective is not maximising the value of production in money terms. The objective is, and must be, the provision of food, clothing, shelter, education, and health services, for everyone, under conditions which provide for universal human dignity.

Land Reform is a Prerequisite

That objective can only be achieved if certain basic facts are recognized and acted upon. First among these is that those who own the land will use it for their own benefit. If the land in a state is owned by a small number of people, these can be relied upon to maximise their own private income from that land by using it for whatever crop will bring most profit to themselves. If the land is owned by the peasants, either individually or collectively, it will be used to meet their needs. Actions which transfer land to the people are an essential first step in the fight against poverty.

Experience suggests that where the ownership of land is inequitable, securing change is not just a question of passing Land Reform Legislation. There are now only a few states without some kind of Land Reform laws. But in too many cases these laws are cosmetic; or else the machinery of the state does not enforce them against the opposition of local or international vested interests.

And even if effective Land Reform is carried out, that is not enough. The poor who have gained land under it - again whether privately

or co-operatively - have to have access to credit, to improved seeds and tools, and to new knowledge, if the transfer of power over the land's resources is to be permanent and to lay the basis for future development. It takes a great deal of political commitment, and a strong political will, to implement Land Reform and to give the necessary economic support to the beneficiaries. These things can never be done painlessly.

Rural Diversification

But "Land to the People" is not a solution on its own.

If poverty is to be abolished in the rural areas, farming activities must be efficient. They have to produce a surplus so that the rural economy can be diversified by the development of alternative sources of production and employment. Rural industries must be established to process the farmers' crops and provide many of their domestic and agricultural goods. Forestry and animal husbandry must use land not suitable for arable farming; these activities can provide fuel, wood for housing and furniture, animal protein, and also incomes for the rural community. Water control and land conservation measures must be built to increase the productivity of the land at the same time as they provide clean water and possibly power. Schools, dispensaries, sports facilities, and so on, need to be established and supported in the rural areas to improve the lives of all who dwell there. This kind of diversification of the rural economy is an essential part of the struggle for human development and human dignity.

Rural Diversification, however, requires that technology should be suited to the needs of the people. We have many unemployed and under-employed people in the rural areas. Leaving them to rot while we "save labour" with foreign purchased, expensive and sophisticated machinery, will lead to an increase - not a decrease - in poverty, regardless of what it does to the Gross National Product. It seems that at least in the initial phases of development our agriculture and our rural service industries need to be labour-intensive rather than capital intensive.

The Use of Rural Surpluses

But to say that the rural areas must produce a surplus to finance diversification is to beg the question. Rural areas do produce a surplus now. The trouble is that it is extracted and used to finance luxurious consumption patterns of the rich and the kind of development in urban areas which will support the present economic structures. The surpluses are extracted by the comparative pricing of primary products and manufactured goods. It is done also by the combination of regressive taxation and the allocation of government expenditure to services needed by town dwellers rather than those needed by the people in villages.

Rural development, and the diversification of the rural economy which it involves, will not take place without fundamental changes in the present approach to development and to government activities. These have to be redirected in order to encourage rural production, and to ensure that the surpluses produced in the rural areas are not used for the development of the urban centres in the interests of the economic or political elite.

Policies to this end cannot be divorced from the rest of government activities. National pricing and taxation policies designed to ensure the retention of rural surpluses in the rural areas are unlikely to be consistent with import or incomes policies which allow the purchase of

foreign luxury goods by the better off. Social and Public Utility policies are also involved in a fight against rural poverty. For this implies giving priority to universal primary and technical education in preference to advanced studies in the humanities, or indeed to much in the way of post-graduate professional studies. It also implies that Rural dispensaries and Health Centres will have to be given preference over sophisticated Hospital services for the few. And so on.

Transfer of Resources

Such a radical reorientation of a nation's economic and social organization would take time to implement even if there were no political difficulties involved. Yet people are suffering from malnutrition in their millions now, not in twenty years time. Further, the extraction of rural wealth has been going on for centuries; some of that wealth has been used to establish self-sustaining income-generating enterprises in the urban areas as well as to build the infrastructure for civilised town life. And in any case, many things have to be mass-produced if they are to be manufactured at all; not all industrial activities can be dispersed over the countryside. The wealth produced by a diamond or copper mine also inevitably comes from one locality.

The urban areas and mines may thus be a nation's biggest wealth producers in economic terms - whatever the policies of the government. Indeed, a policy which ignored the potential of such activities within the nation would not be contributing to the abolition of poverty. What is needed instead is that some of the wealth from this inherited capital and from new national developments of this kind should be channelled into the rural areas - and in particular to those rural areas which are most backward for reasons of history, geography or geology.

Once again this requires Government action. Although internationally we are still at the stage of regarding a transfer of resources from the rich to the poor as being a matter for the voluntary decision of the rich, there is no excuse for such an attitude within nations. Giving land to the people, and acting to ensure that rural surpluses are retained in the rural areas is essential; but it is only the first step. By itself, it is not enough. It has to be combined with deliberate policies which transfer resources from these wealth-producing sectors to the financing of social and productive capital in the rural areas. This can be done either by government control and pricing policies, or by the taxation structure, or by a judicious mixture of the two. What matters is that it is done.

Power to the People

It is surely quite obvious that as rural development has all these implications it will not occur unless governments are absolutely committed to attacking poverty at its roots in the rural areas, and unless they can create a capacity to carry out that policy despite the opposition of those who now batten on the rural poor. But that is not the whole answer. Governments by themselves cannot achieve rural development. They can only facilitate it and make it possible. They can organize, help and guide; they cannot do. For rural development is people's development of themselves, their lives and environment. And the people cannot do it if they have no power.

If the people are to be able to develop they must have power. They must be able to control their own activities within the framework of their village communities. And they must be able to mount effective pressure nationally also. The people must participate not just in the

physical labour involved in economic development but also in the planning of it and the determination of priorities. At present the best intentioned governments - my own included - too easily move from a conviction of the need for rural development into acting as if the people had no ideas of their own. This is quite wrong. At every stage of development people do know what their basic needs are. And just as they will produce their own food if they have land, so if they have sufficient freedom they can be relied upon to determine their own priorities of development and then to work for them.

Both political and economic power has to be held by the people within the village, in the region, and in the nation, if development is to be in the people's interests. People are the best creators and defenders of their own human rights - including the right to eat. Freedom is essential to development and not just a product of it. But freedom does not mean, and must not be allowed to mean, the freedom of the Rich and the Clever to exploit the Poor and Ignorant. The individual is part of the conscious human race or he is an animal grubbing for sustenance. It is through co-operation that each of us develops his own potential and receives personal identity. And co-operation has its own requirements and makes its own demands upon us all.

Rural Development is National Development

A policy of rural development is thus a policy of national development. You cannot have "rural development" as an extra, tagged on to the other policies of Government. They would be a continuation of what we have been doing until now. Rural Development must be a description of the whole strategy of growth - the approach to development, and the prism through which all policies are seen, judged, and given priority.

I want to stress this point. There is now a widespread tendency for any proposal to build a modern factory to be condemned as contrary to the priority needed for rural development. An example of this attitude is that when developing countries ask for external aid to finance a new trunk road, a railway, an airport, or a Consultant Hospital, they are at present liable to be told that prospective donors want to support rural development, not industrialisation, communications systems or sophisticated medical services. And again, within our developing countries there is a tendency to think that if you have made a budgetary allocation for something called "rural development", then the rest of Government policies and expenditure patterns can go on as before.

Such attitudes defeat any hope of rural development, or of implementing a "basic needs approach". Rural development, for example, requires greater use of fertilisers - both organic and chemical - with the consequential need for a fertiliser plant or a phosphate mine, or both. It needs a factory to produce animal-drawn ploughs, harrows, seeders - and another producing tractors and bulldozers. It needs electrical power, both for decent living in the rural areas, and for village industries. It needs roads, railways - and ports - to transport farming inputs and the products of rural areas as well as to enable rural people to participate in national affairs. A Rural Development strategy thus requires a whole industrial and communications development policy which is geared to the needs of the rural areas and the masses who live in them.

Nor is this all. However much a young nation is trying to build an economy oriented towards the needs of its own people, it will still have to export something in order to pay for essential imports. So it will need to develop export industries - either agricultural or industrial; and the more its primary exports are processed, the more imports it will

receive for them - which implies a need for another layer of industrial-type development. And industries cannot all be labour-intensive. When you have plenty of labour but little capital it is important to give preference to small sugar mills, small ceramics factories, local furniture making and so on. But you cannot produce electricity on a labour-intensive basis, nor build lorries or tractors without heavy capital investment relative to the labour which will be employed.

Every aspect of government and public activity, in other words, has to be angled towards promoting mass welfare in the rural areas, while yet enabling the urban areas to service effectively the rural areas from which their sustenance comes and which are their justification for existing.

I repeat. Rural Development means development. It indicates an approach, and the order of priorities. It involves every aspect of government and social activities. It means acting to reverse the traditional flow of wealth from the rural areas into the towns and forcing that wealth into channels which will benefit the workers who actually produce it with their hands and their brains. It means transferring to the poorer and rural areas some of the wealth produced in the richer economic sectors. In practically all developing countries these things require a revolution in the present patterns of government expenditure and of taxation. They will be done if, and only if, the people can organize their own power in their own interest.

The Rural Areas of the World

Up to now I have been speaking almost as if poverty in the Third World was exclusively a matter for action by the developing countries themselves, with the developed countries being relevant only as Aid donors and sympathisers. Tackling the subject in this order was deliberate. We do have national governments which can act. If we in the developing countries are not actively working to overcome absolute poverty among our own citizens, we have no right to complain about the contrast of poverty and wealth between nations.

But it is necessary that we should face facts. When a country like mine prevents a few individuals from exploiting others, or tries to give priority to the rural areas, we are doing only one thing. We are distributing poverty more fairly. When the National income per head is about \$190, your Budget arguments are about where in 360 000 square miles to build one small bridge, while everyone knows that hundreds of bridges are needed urgently if people and goods are to move freely around the country.

It is not only within nations that we need to give priority to Rural Development. World growth, and world development, must also be based on a strategy of rural development. And for the world, the rural areas are the developing nations. This Conference cannot do its job properly if it pushes to one side the question of world practices about investment, prices, education, services, and the distribution of present and future wealth sources.

Everything which I have said in relation to the implications of a strategy of rural development within nations can also be applied to international economic and political relationships. The only exception - and it is an important one - is that we have no world government which can make decisions and enforce them.

But there is a world economy, and there are international institutions, even if there is no world government. Our national economies are

linked; the poverty or prosperity of one country affects the economy of all others. When potential customers are too poor to buy, the manufacturer suffers - internationally as well as nationally. And under the present world economic order the rich and the industrialised areas - regardless of whether these are capitalist or socialist - automatically, as well as by the exercise of naked power, extract from the poor and rural areas even that little which they have.

It is done through the pricing mechanisms of primary products relative to manufactured goods, by the virtual monopoly of international transportation facilities, by the control of world currency and credit which is exercised by the rich nations - and by a hundred other so-called market forces. Among these should not be forgotten the industrial and financial activities of the great transnational corporations, and their manipulations to increase the wealth of the already rich at the expense of the desperately poor.

The present world economic order is not working very smoothly, even according to its major beneficiaries. For it works smoothly only when the dominant sectors can go on expanding and exploiting without hindrance, and when the major power centres are unchallenged in their access to raw materials and untrammelled by considerations of sovereign or human rights. That was the importance of the end of colonialism politically, and the importance also of the rise of lesser industrial and political power centres.

Yet on a world scale we are still being told that the solution to the present economic ills is for greater investment and greater wealth accretion in the already developed areas. We are told that the real problem comes from the oil producers among the developing countries, who have found a way of preventing their wealth being extracted in the interests of cheap transport and cheap power in the industrial economies. The fundamental imbalance between the world's rural and urban nations - between the industrial and the primary producer areas - is not yet universally recognized as the root cause of world economic problems and world poverty. Rural Development as a strategy on the world scale is not - unfortunately - the fashion among the economists and politicians of the developed nations. When it appears on international Agendas under the guise of the demand for a New International Economic Order, the reaction is still resistance - not co-operation for its orderly introduction. The recent UNCTAD Conference provided yet another example of the determination of the Rich to remain rich, and to go on getting richer at the expenses of the poor.

Yet it is clear that a strategy of Rural Development for overcoming poverty has two aspects. One is internal within the nations of the Third World. The other, equally important, is external to any single nation; it involves the whole world. The problem of poverty cannot be effectively tackled unless there is action on both fronts, simultaneously.

2 Development Reconsidered

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Development Philosophy and Objectives

Development Defined

Our view of development is a process by which one's overall personality is enhanced. This is so for a society as well as for an individual. For society the identity is collective. Thus development for society means development of the collective personality of society.

The collective is an association of individuals who interact mutually and collectively with each other with specified rules, and to which jurisdiction is consciously surrendered. Personality stands for a distinct identity, self-confidence, creative ability, an ability to face the world with poise, purpose and pride.

Development of collective personality requires physical (material, economic) development, but it is above all the development and application of consciousness and faculties. A child may grow physically while his personality does not develop. So it is with society. Thus 'economic development', while it is vitally necessary, cannot be treated as an independent question divorced from its social bearings. Development of a society is social development, a process in which 'economic' and 'non-economic' elements interact organically with each other. Attempts to isolate the 'economic' elements and fit them into any hypothetical model of 'economic development' are therefore unscientific.

Development thus defined is a multi-variate quantitative and qualitative change and may not be immediately measurable cardinally. This is not necessary. Development of an individual also may not be measured cardinally: one looks at his height and weight, and at his overall personality, judges his development from one's own vantage point.

By making the underlying value judgement explicit, communication is made possible. Weights are sometimes used to compare attributes by consensus among evaluators for limited purposes (e.g. for admission into school); such weights seldom enjoy universality, and judgement ultimately remains subjective. So it is with social development. It would be futile to attempt to measure any country's social development quantitatively and expect consensus about it: the world's richest society may be considered to be its richest, and hence not developed at all. Such positions can be understood but cannot be refuted, and yet scientific judgements may be given on such a basis. While scientific judgements about social development need to be reasoned, cardinal quantification has often served as a fetish that has detracted from rather than helped evaluate the more essential qualitative attributes.

The Individual and the Collective

The individual and the collective might be thought to have conflicting interests. Our concept of the collective rules this out. The collective exists to the extent that individuals acquiesce in its sovereignty, and develops as individuals acquire more of this collective spirit. Thus a nation of 'self-seekers' may be a collective only in the sense that its members have agreed to hold a common passport; if there is no more of the 'collective spirit', it would be a very weak collective indeed.

However, the 'collective spirit' is not an abnegation of individual interest in favour of a mystified concept of 'society'. We view the collective as a method of serving individual interests while at the same time raising individual consciousness, so that one progressively aspires to fulfilment of higher orders including fulfilment in developing together. The individual will contribute his utmost to the collective output, from which he will in turn receive goods and services that enrich him materially, culturally, emotionally; these include material products, social services, security, a sense of belonging to a society, pride in national achievement, fulfilment in helping one's distressed neighbours, and so on.

To thus serve every individual, according to principles collectively determined to which every individual is a party, is indeed the very objective of the collective.

It is easy to see that the more everybody contributes to the collective the more everybody may receive from it. By definition the distribution decided upon by the collective maximizes social (collective) welfare out of given output, and the greater the collective spirit generated in individuals the greater will be the social output available for distribution.

Thus our view of the collective is not that of an 'agrarian utopia', but of a society where material production and economic growth are an integral part in the process of development of its collective personality. This concept of collective rules out the pursuit of the 'animal' spirit or self-interest, whereby one tries to take as much from society as one can without submitting to a collective evaluation of one's share in the give and take.

The invocation to look at the collective as a means of individual self-fulfilment is not new. 'Serve the people' is an age-old preaching by the great seers of mankind, although how far it has been demystified in terms of more understandable individual and social objectives could be questioned.

The community spirit is manifest in many tribal societies even today, with collective ownership of property as its material base (e.g. among the Khasis in Meghalaya state in India and some of the islands in the Pacific), and in pre-capitalist agricultural societies in Asia and elsewhere, where despite breakdown of collective ownership a sense of community still prevails.

Aspirations Frontier

Within the framework of the above philosophy development has to have its operational objectives. One of these is growth of the collective spirit mentioned above. Stimulating the spirit of cooperation is another, by means of which the collective consciousness may be promoted and the quantity of social good to be produced may be raised. Creativity and

innovativeness, and a problem-solving approach to life, are essential attributes of a dynamic personality and have to be cultivated. Improvement of knowledge is a basic requirement. A will to develop and faith in the collective creative potential of man are fundamental prerequisites with which society must be equipped.

Somewhat more complex is the question of attaining an 'aspirations frontier'. At any point in time individuals in a society have certain natural aspirations, such as a minimum of nourishment, clothing and shelter, some leisure and opportunity for cultural-scientific pursuits. For many Asian societies this may have to be set as a long-run objective, beyond the material possibilities in the short run. This leaves the problem of sustaining morale in the short run.

The solution lies in the direction of creating values that give a sense of fulfilment in the very austerity that is necessary in the short run. Such fulfilment is possible only if the austerity is shared in a framework of collective effort for progress.

Self-reliance

Of all the new values to be created, self-reliance is the single most important. Asia has depended too long on external masters. Rural Asia has depended too long on the city. The rural poor have been subservient too long to the rural rich and to the 'officer' sent from the city, a subservience that has been forced upon them; in the process their own initiative and vitality have been sapped. The result is a history of exploitation of the 'dependent' by the 'master'. The dependent, appearing to have no self-respect, commands no respect from others. He is laughed at by the world and despised at the same time as he is squeezed.

Asia cannot develop unless it rejects the soft option and resolves to be self-reliant. This means building up a combination of material and mental reserves that enable one to choose one's own course of evolution, uninhibited by what others desire. It requires maximum mobilization of domestic resources for poor societies, but above all it requires psychological and institutional staying power to meet crisis situations when the supply of essential materials is too short. This staying power is best attained collectively: individually a hungry man feels isolated and his mental reserve wanes; collectively this reserve is reinforced for each, and collective resolve gives individuals strength to fight a calamity with heads high.

Self-reliance does not necessarily mean self-sufficiency. With psychological staying power a self-reliant society can open up and negotiate from a position of strength. But some measure of self-sufficiency in strategic areas more easily prone to manipulation by exploitative interests is desirable. Such vulnerable areas are staple food production, technology and spare parts, and military resistance power.

All these make the development of appropriate technology indispensable. While development of a modern sector is imperative, the technological revolution has to be primarily internally achieved. It may have been genuinely hoped that the developing countries of Asia would not have to start from scratch—that they could borrow from the technology shelf of the West. But history has shown that import substitution of technology is virtually impossible; unequal exchange in international trade, restrictive clauses of transfer and the inappropriateness of highly capital- and skill-intensive western technology militate against the possibility of Asia achieving technological independence via an outward-looking strategy. Technological revolution has to be internally achieved, also because of its social implications. The masses of the people must not be alienated by

a transplantation of elitist technology not rooted in their lives. Technological development has to be based on local resources, and on people's own initiative and felt needs; it must also be efficiently labour-intensive so as to ensure optimum use of available local resources, of which labour is the most abundant.

Participatory Democracy

The collective as we conceive it functions through the active participation of the people. Without this the individual would not belong organically to the collective and the collective itself would not to that extent be a reality. The collective and participatory democracy are hence inseparable concepts. Participatory democracy is not the formal voting of leaders into power once every five years and passive obedience in-between; it is not merely government 'of the people and for the people' but also, and more fundamentally, 'by the people'. Participatory democracy rules out dominance of any minority group over the broad masses of people. In the Asian context it precludes, therefore, dictatorship of the 'elite' over the masses, of the city over the countryside and of the modern sector over the traditional, and new forms of external control which would dilute the process of democracy. Moreover, there is no room in this participatory system for power-wielding, though intelligent, leadership, which is alien to the broad masses of the people and tends to strengthen its own position at the expense of the latter; nor is there a place for the unaccountable and unresponsive bureaucrat who considers it beneath him to have any interaction with the masses.

Participatory democracy can be more fully practised the lower one goes in the organizational hierarchy of society, and must be so practised. At higher levels e.g. regional, national, some system of representation becomes inevitable, and the problem arises of making the representative remain true to the consciousness and aspirations of their respective constituencies and be truly accountable to them. The objective here is to devise a mechanism that lives up to this requirement.

Consciousness Gap

The problem of a 'consciousness gap' between leaders of a society and the masses of the people remains. In concrete historical conditions in any society some persons may be ahead of others in perceptions of the need for social change, in their ability to systematize ideas whose origins are in the masses themselves, in seeing through complex relationships and in relevant technical expertise. Such men are natural leaders of society, whom the masses of the people tend to follow without coercion. Participatory democracy in such situations would not yet be complete, nor would the leaders be fully accountable to the people in a real sense. Such a relationship may be formally 'democratic', but at the depth of the situation lies the seed or leadership ego which may grow and gradually alienate the leader from his people, so that finally he leads them to a vision that is more his than theirs. This would in turn alienate the people, and inhibit the growth of their collective personality. The leadership and the masses must therefore move in a mutually interacting process that systematically reduces the consciousness gap. Democracy in this sense is not a system to be implanted, but an objective to be realized through a process.

De-alienation

Many of the above objectives imply a regeneration and development of values that man has lost or nearly lost through ages of subordination to

exploitation, maladministration and misdirection. Regressive social relations and cultural taboos have paved the way for such alienation from man's original and inherent potentials. The binding constraint to development in Asia as we conceive it is not a shortage of physical resources but factors that inhibit the fullest expression of man's natural self: identity with work in which he should find pleasure and fulfilment, and with society in which alone he discovers his self, an identity that has been fragmented into elites and the masses, the ruler and the ruled, the privileged and the underprivileged, the 'superior' and the inferior'. Development then must mean a process of de-alienation, i.e. liberation from all inhibitions derived from the structure and superstructure of society that thus dehumanize its broad masses and prevent them from consummating their full potentials.

Conclusion

In essence, the development philosophy and objectives which we have enunciated centre around five core concepts which stand inseparably together:

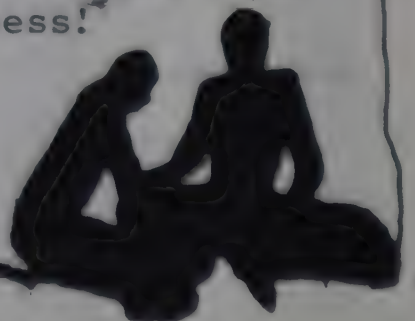
1. Man as the end of development-which therefore to be judged by what it does to him.
2. De-alienation of man, in the sense that he feels at home with the process of development in which he becomes the subject as well as the object.
3. Development of collective personality of man in which he finds his richest expression.
4. Participation as the true form of democracy.
5. Self-reliance as the expression of man's faith in his own abilities.

In the Asia that we are reviewing, rural society accounts for about 80 per cent of the total society. Rural development in Asia is therefore the key to its overall social development. The personality of Asian nations cannot be enhanced without raising the personality of rural Asia. This leads us to a strategy of development which points to the countryside as the centre of activity for contemporary Asia. The inner-directed strategy that we are seeking encompasses the city, but the focus and driving spirit is the village, where the new Asian Drama will inevitably have to be played.

They tell us that we are poor because we are lazy. But have they ever seen us eat our breakfast? Tio Bading's voice is now rising in anger. Because if they have seen us eat our breakfast, and they ate the same breakfast that we eat everyday, they'd be crazy if they were not lazy.

Hell, how many long, hard hours do we put in everyday at the fields from early dawn to late sundown, under burning sun or heavy rain-all in order to survive?

In sugarlands, we know, even pregnant women have to work 10 to 12 hours a day cutting cane or hauling them-for a daily wage of less than four pesos (\$ 0.55). Enough of these accusations of laziness!



Global Interconnections

Before one can find and prescribe a solution to a problem one should understand the problem fully. A critical analysis of a situation, an understanding of all its aspects should be a precondition of any action aimed at the improvement of a situation. Otherwise, one might find oneself fighting the symptoms rather than the causes of a problem. People involved in rural development work should not only try to understand the local situation with its economic, political and social structures (the micro situation) but also the connections of this situation with the macro situation, the power structures at the national and international level. The macro and the micro situation, one would find are intricately bound together. One must be able to see and comprehend these links and connections for in such links may also be found the causes of as well as the solutions to poverty.

There is indeed a relationship between the poverty of the majority and the affluence of the minority, the powerlessness of the majority and power of the minority. It is important to understand how these relationships have been created and how they are perpetuated. If our villages are poor and millions are impoverished, it is not because God does not love the poor but because of other social, economic and political forces which need to be identified and understood and ultimately controlled.

Since our life styles and fate are connected with the lifestyles and fate of others, we must know how others live, what they produce and what and how much they consume. We must know not only the words and good intentions of nations who claim to be our "partners in development", but also their actions and deeds. We must know whether there is any connection between the large and economically very powerful multinational corporations (like Shell, Unilever, Coca Cola, Bata, Ciba, etc.) and the economic development of a poor developing country.

We must also know what the arms race and arms trade is, how much money is spent on the war industry and how big are the military budgets of our own countries.

Similarly we should know about cash crops and their export from poor to the rich countries. What are the terms of trade? Do the developing countries get good prices for their products in the world market? Who controls the prices in the world market? Is the production of cash crops for exports really good for a country where people are underfed and undernourished?

These and many more questions need to be raised and discussed because all these issues are related to larger policy matters connected with development.

Given below are extracts from different books. These extracts try to answer some of the above questions and some of them raise more questions. They are being given merely as openers for discussion. Much more needs to be read if these issues are to be analysed and understood well.

1. In "Global Reach" Barnett and Muller explore the political economy of Multinational Corporation.

"By the end of the Decade of Development, however, despite dramatic economic growth in a few poor countries, it had become abundantly clear that the gap between rich and poor throughout the world was widening. A succession of studies by the UN and other international agencies established the statistics of global poverty: For 40 to 60 per cent of the world's population the Decade of Development brought rising unemployment, decreases in purchasing power, and thus lower consumption...particularly in those countries which experienced "economic miracles", the pattern was increasing affluence for a slowly expanding but small minority and increasing misery for a rapidly swelling majority. Concentration of income in Mexico, for example, has increased significantly during the "Mexican Miracle". In the early 1950's, the richest 20 per cent of the population had ten times the income of the poorest 20 per cent. By the mid 1960's the rich had increased their share to seventeen times what the bottom 20 per cent received.

When the global corporations proclaim themselves engines of development, we can judge their claims only if we know what development track they are on. A mechanical definition of development based on growth rates is obscene in a world in which most people go to sleep hungry...If a development model is to have any real meaning in a world in which most people are struggling just to stay alive, it must, as the development theorist Dudley Seers has pointed out, provide solutions to the most critical, interrelated social problems of the late twentieth century: poverty, unemployment, and inequality...The evidence of the 1960's is now in. It is an unhappy fact that the development track pursued by the global corporations in those years contributed more to the exacerbation of world poverty, world unemployment, and world inequality than their solution.

.....The primary interest of global corporations is world wide profit maximization. As we shall see, it is often advantageous for the global balance sheet to divert income from the poor countries.

.....The central strategy of the global corporations is the creation of a global economic environment that will ensure stability, expansion, and high profits for the planetary enterprise. The implementation of that strategy depends upon the control of three basic components of corporate power: finance capital, technology, and market place ideology. The record of the past dozen years suggests clearly that the global corporations have used these components of power, as one might expect, to prompt growth and profitability. But it is these very strategies which have had an adverse effect on distribution of income and on employment levels in underdeveloped countries around the world.

I Let us look first at the financial policies of the global corporations in poor countries. Perhaps the strongest argument in favour of the global corporations' claim to be the engines of development is that they are a source of needed capital for backward countries. Particularly at a time when government aid programmes are drying up, the foreign corporation, it is argued, is a crucial source of the finance capital that poor countries need to supplement local savings and to obtain foreign exchange.

.....The claim that global corporations are major suppliers of foreign capital to poor countries turns out to be more metaphor than reality. The practice of global corporations in Latin America, as Fernando Fajnzulber has shown in his exhaustive study for the United Nations, has been largely to use scarce local capital for their local operations rather than to bring capital from either the United States or Europe. Individual investors and banks in poor countries for understandable business reasons normally prefer to lend money to Sears, Roebuck or General Motors than to some local entrepreneur without the world-wide credit resources of the planetary giants. Thus during the years 1957-1965, as Fajnzulber shows, US-based global corporations financed 83 per cent of their Latin American investment locally, either from reinvested savings or from Latin American Savings. Only about 17 per cent of US investment during the period, therefore, represented a transfer of capital from rich countries to poor.

.....Between 1960-1968, according to Fajnzylber's UN study, US-Based global corporations reported taking 79 per cent of their net profits out of Latin America. It makes good business sense to try for a quick return on a modest investment in countries like the Latin American republics, which are considered relatively unstable. In contrast, the same corporations operating in the developed economics of Western Europe are much readier to leave their profits in the country. But of course the poor countries are precisely the ones that need to keep the earnings for their development. This is but one example where sound business judgement and the needs of the poor countries conflict... However these profitable practices, far from representing an import of capital, actually decrease the availability of local capital for locally owned industry. At the same time, scarce financing is released to the general public in the form of consumer debt at exorbitant interest.

The adverse financial impact of the global corporations in Latin America has to do not only with the source of investment but with its character. A principal argument for foreign investment is that it supplies new capital through which the superior management skills of global corporations can be channeled into new productive facilities. (The world managers sometimes argue that they can use local capital much more efficiently for the development of the country than local entrepreneurs). But again the record suggests otherwise... In the years 1958-1967 US firms used a substantial part of their investment to buy up local firms. Again, it is sound business judgement to buy an already operating plant rather than take the risk of building a new one, but changing ownership does not increase productive facilities needed for development.

Another standard argument in chamber-of-commerce speeches around the world is that global corporations help solve the balance-of-payments problems of poor countries.-one characteristic shared by poor countries is lack of foreign exchange. The reason, of course, is that the more undeveloped a country is the less likely it is to make things that foreigners want. The only way to get dollars or pounds or marks needed to buy capital goods or consumer luxuries from the US, Britain, or Germany is to make, mine, or grow something that these countries need or want. During the last decade the underdeveloped countries' share of world exports declined precipitously. This has been due to the dramatic increase in trading among the developed countries (most of it stimulated by global corporations) and to the loss of markets and decline in price of certain agricultural products.

.....Whether exports benefit a poor country depends critically on the price. It does not help the foreign-exchange problem of a poor country to export goods at a bargain. When global corporations buy from and sell to their own subsidiaries, they establish prices that often

have little connection to the market place. Indeed, when the corporate head-quarters is acting as both buyer and seller, the very concept of the market has lost its significance ...such "transfer prices", as they are called deviate from the market price for good business reasons. Thus the artificial price charged on the export minimized total taxes for the world corporation and increases its global profits, but the result in the manufacturing country is that it loses foreign exchange (not to mention tax revenue) it would have received had that been an arm's length transaction between independent buyers and sellers.

There are several other advantages to the company in addition to the avoidance in manipulating import and export prices.....In countries which impose a percentage limitation on the repatriation of profits, overpricing imports and underpricing exports are good ways to repatriate more profits than the local government allows. All this makes good business sense, but its impact on the economy of the poor country is cruel.

II The second important contribution to development that global corporations claim is the transfer of technology. According to the conventional development wisdom of the past generations, US, European, and Japanese corporations can help close the gap between rich and poor by sharing their advanced technology with underdeveloped countries so as to help them increase their productivity on which rapid economic growth depends. There is no doubt that the import of foreign technology has a major impact on poor countries. But as in the case of foreign capital which we have discussed, the import of foreign technology has not had the positive effects hoped for and claimed. Once again the reason is that the suppliers of the technology, the global corporations, and the recipients of the technology have conflicting interests, and the bargaining power has been on the side of the corporations.

Technology is the key to economic power in the modern world. Global corporations as we have seen, are for the most part oligopolies. Their enviable position usually rests on some piece of exclusive technology which they are not anxious to make available to actual or potential competitors. At the same time, if they are to operate globally they are forced to spread their technology. Their strategy is to maintain maximum control in the process.

Why is technological dependence an obstacle to development? A crucial resource of any society is its capacity to develop the right kind of technology for its own needs. The very purpose of a patent system is to encourage the inventiveness from abroad, it ordinarily means that funds for research and development go to the foreign firm to develop its technology still further - technology that is designed for world-wide profit maximization, not the development needs of the poor countries.

Both China and Japan have understood the extraordinary importance of technological independence to economic development. For China the point was brought home rather graphically in 1960 when Khrushchev precipitately withdrew the Soviet technicians on whom the country was so heavily dependent. The Japanese made their extraordinary strides in the post war era by zealously developing their own technology and keeping it out of the hands of foreigners or by licensing it from foreign firms.

.....The attempt to prevent foreign control of technology is in fact quite rational because poor countries lack bargaining power, the technology that global corporations transfer is often obsolete and overpriced.

A more fundamental criticism of the global corporations role in technology transfer is that its own interest impel it to transfer precisely the sort of technology poor countries need least. Thus in many

uses the imported technology is too expensive and too complicated - having been developed for the needs of industrialized societies, it does not solve and may indeed aggravate the problems of poor countries - with few exceptions, the global corporations have not been inventive about tailoring technology to the needs of the under developed world. ...For the most part it is technology for enhancing private consumption, not for solving social problems.

The one characteristic of global corporate technology with the most devastating consequences for poor countries is that it destroys jobs. Typically, poor countries abound in human resources. Yet the sort of technology that global corporations export to poor countries is capital-intensive and labour saving...Instead of making efficient use of manpower of the underdeveloped world, such transferred technology tends to convert their human resources, which are their biggest assets, into social liabilities.

As the technology of global corporations operating in poor countries has become more sophisticated, the investment needed to employ a single worker, particularly in chemical, machinery, paper, rubber, and food industry, where global corporations have concentrated their operation, has tripled. Dudley Seers, commissioned by the ILO to study high-technology industry in Colombia, found that whereas it took 45,000 pesos to employ one worker in 1957, by 1966 it took 100,000 1957 pesos.

The People's Republic of China has helped to solve what used to be a mammoth unemployment problem before the Revolution through various forms of "reverse engineering" designed to convert capital intensive technology into more labour intensive technology. In Japan and Korea such operations as weaving and rubber and plywood production are much more labour intensive than equivalent processes in the U.S. The Japanese are now producing in Chinese Communes 30,000 out of the 100,000 trucks they manufacture each year. Jacks, monkey wrenches, and tool kits are other items now being made in China for Japanese firms.

During the 1960's the conflicts (between the financial goals of the corporations and the development goals of the poor countries) were resolved in favour of the corporations, with disastrous effects on employment and income distribution.

III The third source of power of the global corporation in the poor countries is the control over ideology - the values that determine how people live. ...Throughout the underdeveloped world global corporations are successfully marketing the same dreams they have been selling in the industrialized world. Stimulating consumption in low income countries, and accommodating local tastes to globally distributed products is crucial to the development of an ever expanding Global Shopping Centre... Now, the world managers argue, can the transfer of the consumption ideology, which has so much to do with the expansion of the U.S. economy, be bad for the poor countries?

Whether the transfer of market place ideology by global corporations is good or bad for development depends once again on what is meant by development. If the priority of development policy is to alleviate the most crushing problem of the underdeveloped world - mass poverty resulting from unemployment and inequality - then we must conclude that the transfer of the global corporations to poor countries has had several disastrous impactsThe global corporate strategy actually reinforces the sharp class cleavages that exist in all poor countries. The principal targets of most global corporations are the enclaves of affluence within destitute societies. Peter Drucker the father of the Global Shopping Centre,

points out that within the "vast mass of poverty that is India" there is "a sizeable modern economy, comprising of 10 per cent or more of the Indian population, or 50,000,000 people"....Obviously, expensive capital goods such as automobiles, luxuries such as fine watches and cameras, and costly services such as a plane ride to New York, are available to only a tiny fraction of the population in underdeveloped countries, although in absolute numbers it represents a sizeable market, these items are frequently imports and exhaust scarce foreign exchange.

What effect does the export of dreams have on those who cannot afford to indulge them?...Quantitative evidence of the impact of advertising on the bottom 40 to 60 per cent of the population in the underdeveloped world is meager.

Market place ideology has a political impact on the poor in this century not unlike that of the state church in past centuries. But whereas the church may have pacified the wretched of the earth by promising them a heaven in a future life, the world-wide advertising agencies are selling solace through consumption for the here and now. Through both its programme content and its advertising message, T.V. has a socializing influence on poor countries. Studies of the impact of T.V. in Peru suggest that the poor embrace the T.V. culture because it offers new fantasies that permit escape from the rigid class structure of their country.

"The factory girl or the sales girl in Lima or Bombay (or the Harlem Ghetto)" says Peter Drucker, "Wants a lipstick.....There is no purchase that gives her as much true value for a few cents". The fact that she is in all probability malnourished and without a decent place to live does not mean that she is spending foolishly.

One message that comes through clearly is that happiness, achievement and being white (advertisements invariably portray fair/white men and women) have something to do with each other.....one effect of such "white is beautiful" advertising is to reinforce feelings of inferiority which are the essence of a politically immobilizing colonial mentality.

A crucial organisational strategy for those societies which have made real steps towards solving the problem of mass misery, unemployment, and inequality has been to mobilize, the population by encouraging their sense of identity, as individuals and as members of a national community. In countries (like China, Cuba, Tanzania and N. Vietnam) the population is continually being asked to believe that they are "new people" who by virtue of their own abilities and energies are able to transform their societies in ways unknown in human history.

Ultimately, the claim of global corporations to be engines of development must be judged in terms of the world hunger crisis. Food to sustain life and strength is the most basic human requirement.....The global corporations have compounded the world hunger problem in three ways. First, they have contributed to the concentration of income and the elimination of jobs. Second, through its increasing control of arable land in poor countries, agribusiness is complicating the problem of food distribution. Finally, the companies control of ideology through advertising has helped to change the dietary habits of the poor in unfortunate ways. Beginning in 1966, the major global food companies had begun research on low-cost protein foods, baby cereals, soft drinks, imitation milk, candies, snacks, soups and noodles, and by 1968 a dozen such products were on the market.

Global companies have used their great levers of power - finance capital, technology, organisational skills, and mass communications - to

create a global shopping centre in which the hungry of the world are invited to buy expensive snacks and a Global Factory in which there are fewer and fewer jobs. The World Managers' vision of one world turns out in fact to be two distinct worlds. - one featuring rising affluence for a small transnational middle class, and the other escalating misery for the great bulk of the human family.

1960's was declared the "development decade". Here in Asia, our primary focus was supposed to be "self-reliance". We first tried to encourage "import-substitution" industries, so that we could conserve our valuable foreign exchange and also develop our own industries. By the mid-1960's we were forced to re-think, because this strategy did not pay off. Then we turned to another rhetoric" export-oriented industrialisation. But whom did it benefit? Muto Ichiyo explodes this myth in his "The Free Trade Zone and Mystique of Export Oriented Industrialisation". (in Free Trade Zones and Industrialization in Asia, Special Issue AMP, Japan - Asia Quarterly Review Tokyo, 1977). Let us look at a chronology of events that occurred in the 1960's.

In early 1965, the U.S. launched its frontal on-slaught on the revolutionary national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people by air raids and the landing of troops in Danang.

In September the same year, an apparently U.S. CIA-backed coup occurred in Indonesia, overthrowing Sukarno and swinging the U.S. into virtual ownership of the country's rich petroleum resources.

President Johnson announced a \$ 1 billion Southeast Asia Development Plan (later developed into the ADB's Mekong Development Program) in which the earlier formulated counter-insurgency programs were integrated.

The World Bank set up consultative groups to discuss the questions of Malaysia's and Thailand's foreign debts. The Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) first met in 1966 to strategize new fiscal and aid policies for that country. In the same year, the International Economic Cooperation for Korea (IECOK) was established.

The Asian Development Bank was agreed to in 1965 and established in 1966.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in 1966.

Under pressure from Washington and for its own imperial purposes, Japan concluded in 1965 the "Japan-Republic of Korea Normalization Treaty" with Park Chung Hee's government, promising a total of \$500 million aid in 10 years, and also signed the first yen-loan agreement with Taiwan to assume part of US aid to Chiang Kai Shek.

In 1969 the U.S. established the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), whose stated purpose is to "mobilize and facilitate the participation of U.S. private capital and skills in the economic and social progress of less developed friendly countries and areas, thereby complementing the development assistance objectives of the U.S."

David Rockefeller, leader of the Rockefeller group and chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank, visited Asia in 1970, declaring in Singapore that American oil companies would invest a total of \$45 billion in Asia and West Pacific in the coming twelve years, most of it in Southeast Asia.

These pieces fall together to form a coherent picture, whose determining pattern is the arrival of U.S.-based (and Japan-based) giant corporations in the Asian-Pacific region with a barrage of cover fire from the U.S. government and behind the war front opened in Vietnam.

Several particular factors encouraged this outward move of MNCs into the Asian-Pacific region. The dollar crisis, apparent since the early 1960s, made it imperative to cut back direct military spending in Asia. The high cost of Vietnam made alternative strategies of control, economic and political, necessary. Hence, direct military aid was gradually replaced by official loans and commercial ties.

Also, a fierce competition began to emerge between home-based U.S. corporations on the one hand, and overseas-based U.S. corporations and emergent Japanese capital able to produce at lower costs on the other. This stimulated major U.S. firms (particularly in electronics) to relocate their facilities in Asia, especially Taiwan and south Korea. Motorola executive Meahan, testifying at the U.S. Senate Sub-committee on Multinational Corporations, said his firm had gone to Korea for essentially competitive reasons. "Our competitors had gone to Korea, some of them, and it was necessary to maintain our competitive position in the world semiconductor market". Asked if cheaper wages were a factor, he replied, "That is a part of it, but also, it is hard to find people in the U.S. to take on that low skilled work".

At a political level, the Nixon Administration was then preparing for the surprise rapprochement with China. The concept of the Pacific Basin as an integral economic entity under U.S. corporate domination underlies Nixon's Guam statement in 1969. Rapprochement with China would facilitate the securing of this economic zone for U.S. MNCs. While the paramount consideration of the U.S. in the proceeding two decades had been military containment of China, from now on the Asian region was to be viewed as a large market and production basin for giant business corporations, with the improved relations with China serving to secure a stable political framework.

Historically this strategy represents the deteriorated hegemony of the U.S. in the Asian region and the necessity to adapt to the strengthened power of liberation forces in the region. At the same time, however, the strategy maximized within the given framework the interests and role of MNCs as instruments of U.S. policy goals, and vice versa. The development since 1965 shows that MNCs and the U.S. government serving their interests began to unfold their Asia-integrating strategy behind the military front created in Vietnam. After the Tet defeat in 1968 Nixon's role was only to tailor the imperial garment to suit the MNC strategy in changed circumstances.

In 1970, the Commission on International Trade and Investments Policy was appointed by Richard Nixon (with Albert L. Williams of IBM as Chairman). This commission, consisting of MNC representatives and scholars, presented in 1971 a voluminous report to the president recommending that all steps to expand U.S. direct investments overseas despite the serious international payments situation of the U.S. and protests from U.S. trade unionists that MNCs were depriving U.S. workers of their jobs. The report says:

The Commission believes that freedom of U.S. enterprises to establish foreign facilities should be maintained even if it is occasionally associated with shifts in production and jobs. To attempt to control foreign investment is both undesirable and ineffective. It is undesirable because the U.S. would fail to take full advantage of its technological potential; and more U.S. workers would tend to be employed in lower-paying jobs, causing relative losses of income to the present and future generations.

It recommended that the "artificial incentives and impediments to foreign investment, whether they result from our own policies or those of foreign governments" should be "reduced". The report strongly recommended the phasing out of the Interest Equalization Tax, which had been designed to restrain the outflow of investments from the United States.

The Nixon Administration accepted these recommendations.

Relations Between the Rich and the Poor

Let us look at the United States of America, a country which has provided more aid for development than any other country, and which claims to be more concerned than anyone else about the preservation of democratic values, human rights, preservation of environment, nature, ecology, etc.

In a paper "How We Cause World Hunger", William Moyer and Pamela Haines, both US citizens, point out the following facts:

With only 6% of world's population the US citizens use between 30% to 40% of the annually consumed resources- for example 42% of the world's annual consumption of aluminum, 44% of the coal, 32% of the cobalt, 33% of the copper, 28% of the iron, 63% of the natural gas, 33% of the petroleum, 38% of the nickel, etc.

One US citizen consumes 22 times as much energy as the average Chinese and pollutes 50 times as much as the average Indian.

The impact of just 250 million US citizens alone would soon strain the environment to its breaking point. The contribution of Third World peoples to environmental destruction is minimal.

In order to maintain its costly style of living, the US needs most of the resources of the poor nations. According to US Government estimates, in a few years' time the US will be importing 50% of its raw materials, almost all of which will come from poor nations. The US is also dependent on the Third World for a variety of agricultural products, such as coffee, tea, bananas, cocoa, sugar, natural rubber, hemp. How this standard of living and interdependence determines the foreign policy of the US is explained by Moyer and Haines, thus:

"The raw materials, which we import from the Third World must remain cheap if we are going to be able to afford them in any quantity witness the tremendous concern over increases in foreign oil prices recently. For massive supplies of cheap raw materials from these countries to be insured, their social order must serve the interests of the US and of their own affluent minorities. Since the interests of these groups is at variance with those of the poor majority, who would choose to put their resources to use for their own benefit, this social order nearly always takes the form of military dictatorships friendly to us rather than to the masses of their own people.

Such socially destructive oligarchical governments cannot stay in power without substantial military support from the US. Consequently, the US must maintain a large military establishment to supply and train Third World dictators, to subvert unfriendly popular governments which might spring up, and to intervene directly with our military when these puppet dictators fail, or when unfriendly governments become too threatening to our interests. We have spent over \$1.1 trillion for military

purposes since 1945, intervening directly in Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Lebanon, Cuba, Formosa, Vietnam and the Dominican Republic while providing covert assistance elsewhere, as in Guatemala, Iran, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay.

This situation, in which the economic and political orientation of poor non-socialist countries is toward servicing the high consumption of the US and other industrialized countries rather than the needs of the majority of their own people, is the most fundamental cause of world poverty and hunger. And we, by supporting the military dictatorships that keep their people from consuming their own resources and condemn them to political repression as well as poverty and hunger, in order to maintain a strong, high-consumption economy here in the US, are a fundamental cause of that situation."

Plunder of World Resources by the Rich

In her book "How the Other Half Dies" Susan George has described the various aspects of hunger and has shown how the governments of affluent nations, their agri-business corporations and the international institutions, as well as the habits of their consumers-keep the others hungry. It shows how specially the US controls world food supplies and their prices. What follows are extracts from her book:

The developed countries eat much more food and consume many times more natural resources than people in the developing countries do. In recent years, the world has produced 1,250 million tons of food and feed grains annually, and the developed countries eat half although they account for only about a quarter of the world's population. Their animals eat fully a quarter of all the grain or the equivalent of the total human consumption of China and India put together-some 1.3 billion people. On an average people in the underdeveloped countries (UDCs) consumed about 506 pounds annually in 1969-71. During the same period in the U.S.A. people averaged 1760 pounds of grain intake, nine-tenths of it in the form of meat, poultry or dairy products. (It takes about 20lb. of grain to produce one lb. of beef, seven or eight to produce one lb. of pork.)

World Bank figures show that on average the one billion people in the countries with per capita incomes \$200 consume only about 1% as much energy per capita as the citizens of the United States.

Hunger and Malnutrition

The extent of hunger is great. In some areas fully half the children can be expected to die of hunger-related illness before the age of five, but in the world as a whole, easily a fifth of all children are judged to be malnourished. The UN claims that one of every eight people in the world is literally starving, and that almost half suffer from malnutrition of one kind or another. Death is only one of the possible consequences. Here are a few of the others.

In a general way, chronically hungry people are physically less developed and mentally less alert than people who eat enough; they have far less resistance to disease and are far more susceptible to invasion by the parasites that proliferate in the poor countries. Their children are fifteen times more likely to die before they reach their first birthday than ours; infant mortality rates are comparable to those that existed in Europe in 1750. Owing to the eradication of some diseases, life expectancy for adults is slightly higher than that of 18th century Europeans, but these adults will not die for the same reasons we will: in France, for instance, 70% of deaths are due to cardio-vascular ailments, cancer and accidents in that order; in the Third World 70% of the people die of

parasitic or infectious disease for which hunger provides the favourable terrain.

All of us have seen pictures of incongruously bloated or prematurely wizened little children. The first are suffering from a protein-deficiency disease called kwashiorkor, a West-African word meaning 'one-two' because this disease may often strike an older child when he is suddenly weaned to make way for a younger sibling. The second is marasmus and occurs when the child lacks both calories and proteins. Most children will not have time to die of either-they will be carried off by some form of gastroenteritis or a sickness like measles, whose mortality rate is, for example, a thousand times higher in Niger than in Western nations. If a person's diet is monotonous, made up of very few foods, and not even enough of those, he will almost invariably suffer from a specific protein, vitamin or mineral deficiency with serious consequences for his health. There are 300 million people in the world with goitre, endemic in many parts of Africa, and goitre can reach the point of clinical cretinism. Some 3 million Third World people are estimated to be wholly unproductive for this reason. Pellagra, which strikes people for whom corn is the only staple food, can also go as far as madness if untreated. The World Health Organization counts one person in five as a victim of iron-deficiency anaemia. Beri-beri, which had nearly been eliminated, is re-appearing especially where the staple diet food is industrially polished rice. Vitamin-A deficiency blindness affects further millions, particularly in the Sahel, Indonesia and India.

Endemic disease also prevents people from even producing their food; a huge area in Africa nearly the size of the entire continental United States cannot be used for food-growing or pasture because it is infested with tripanosomiasis-bearing flies that attack livestock. Malaria, bilharzia, yellow fever and a variety of other maladies that are nothing but names to well-cared-for Westerners also first strike the poor and the hungry.

Perhaps the most morally revolting aspect of the injustices caused by malnutrition is that it can prevent hosts of people from realizing even their genetic potential. Nutritionists have proved to nearly everyone's satisfaction that the baby who wants for sufficient calories and proteins during his final intra-uterine weeks and his first months on earth will be permanently damaged mentally, because the brain cells that were 'programmed' to multiply during this period were not able to do so for lack of food. Even if by some miracle the child is entirely well-fed later on, this condition is irreversible. This has been confirmed in various studies carried out from Guatemala to India, from Mexico to Palestinian refugee camps. One study showed that for a sample of 500 middle-class children, only 1% had an IQ lower than 80, but for 500 poor children who had suffered serious protein calorie malnutrition in their first months, 62% had IQs lower than 80. These people will not be able to hold productive jobs and their personal under-development will be passed on to their children. Such under-development will also be socially self-perpetuating. Another study, undertaken in a Chilean shanty town, showed that mothers who had themselves been malnourished as babies and thus had IQs under 80, or even under 60, were generally unable to cope with their environment effectively enough to feed their own children; whereas higher-IQ mothers living under exactly the same socio-economic conditions with the same meagre resources still managed to feed their children adequately enough to avoid the more serious effects of malnutrition.

Such people will live out their lives as apathetic adults, prevented by disease or damaged genes from making the contributions to their own families and nations they might have made. Since only the poor suffer,

and since the worst-fed among them also run the greatest risk of being ill-housed, ill-cared for and illiterate, it will be very difficult to prod them into doing much to improve their own state if they have no help from better-off, better organized people. One wonders, in fact, if those who contribute to keeping these masses hungry do not know exactly what they are doing, since famished, lethargic, diseased people are notoriously bad at overthrowing anybody.

Bad Weather or Over Population not the Cause of Hunger

Those who profit from injustice do not like honest analysis. In fact, they try to diffuse the issues. This may be one reason so many 'experts' have tried to place the burden for hunger literally in the laps of the hungry; specifically on their reproductive organs! 'Weather' or 'the climate' is another convenient scapegoat because acts of God are supposed to be off-limits to rational examination and alteration.

But it can be quite easily proved that world hunger is not caused by population pressures although these do aggravate the situation. Nor is hunger a result of the 'climate' or the 'weather' as so many people have been led to believe, even if climate can also be an exacerbating factor.

Surely climate cannot be the only factor that shapes our lives and our diets-social organization must have something to do with them. Growing seasons may become shorter, but science has already bred cereal strains that can adapt to briefer periods of sunlight. Cyclones may continue to strike, but a hurricane in Florida and a cyclone of identical force in Pakistan do not have the same consequences, even though both are disasters.

The drought which is a frequent occurrence in the Southwestern United States is not at all the same thing as drought in the Sahel. Natural calamities may point out the weaknesses of underlying social structures, but they do not cause them. If a given social and economic system is vulnerable it may even reach the point of famine without natural disaster. For example, in several especially famine-prone (i.e. structurally vulnerable) countries, even a small shortfall in grain production can lead to full-scale famine when it is accompanied by less cash to invest in the following year's crop (and therefore by less employment and less income for rural workers), by hoarding and speculation on the part of local grain merchants and traders and by the consequent rise in food prices that put the poor totally outside the market.

A particularly striking, though perhaps unwitting, refutation of the 'climate' explanation for hunger comes from a report by the National Geographic on the world food crisis. It cites satellite photographs of the Sahel-one of the world's great food disaster areas-and a particular picture that shows a hexagonal island of green in the great tan sea of the Sahel. Inspection revealed it to be a quarter-million-acre modern ranch, fenced off with barbed wire from the surrounding desert. Inside, other fences divide the ranch into five sectors, with cattle grazing a single sector at a time. Though the ranch has been in operation only seven years, the rotational grazing has made the difference between pasture and desert.

This magazine does not say who owns the range, nor does it ask why such green plenty fenced off with barbed wire should exist in the midst of tens of thousands of starving people. The ranch, whose exploitation corresponds exactly to the six-year period of severe drought (even drought does not exist equally for everyone), unquestionably belongs either to a foreign agri-business corporation or to local wealthy landowners, and it is probably producing beef for foreign cash sales. In neither case does

it give any relief to the nomads of the Sahel who depend on pasture for a livelihood.

The same National Geographic, hardly a radical magazine, in another article shows that even in the case of natural disaster, abundance of food can and does exist alongside generalized famine-caused by classic and uncontrolled economic forces. The following passage concerns Bangladesh after the 1974 floods:

"Despite loss of foodstuffs, however, there is an estimated four million tons of rice in Bangladesh during the famine-enough to feed the entire nation for a third of the year. But the vast majority of the people, subsisting at the poverty level in the best of times and now also victimized by the flooding, are too poor to buy it.

Relief officials tell of widespread smuggling of rice into neighbouring India where it sells for up to twice as much. Hoarders at home drive rice beyond 50% a pound in a country with a per capita income of 70 a year, among the world's lowest. Taking command inflation triggers price jumps of from 200 to 500% in other food. The black market thrives, but at prices hopelessly beyond the reach of the hungry.

Another eye-witness account describes how rich Bangladeshi farmers stood in line all night at fiscal registration bureaux in order to buy, literally at 'famine prices,' land that famished small peasants were selling as a last resort. Each famine takes more land from the poor and thus sets the stage for the next one.

The more enterprising people thrive on the famines, in fact, they create famines. Bertolt Brecht once said, "Famines do not occur, they are organized by the grain trade."

The exploitative system keeps the poor farmers in a state of famine even in good years. The peasants are "victims of financial compulsions that force (them) to sell much of the paddy (rice) they produce and would need for their family consumption for the season at give-away prices soon after harvest or even long before harvest to pay off debts and meet immediate cash needs.....the better end of this bargain belongs to the money lender, the big landholder and other such parties who take advantage of the poor bargaining conditions of these small farmers.....while the farmers themselves, the producers, are ironically compelled later to buy rice from the retail market at much higher prices and often consequently have to go into further debt....."

The Question of Land

The first condition for producing food is to have land. I make no excuses for dealing in apparent cliches. It is partly because such cliches have not been taken seriously enough that there is so much confusion about the world food problem. Most Third World people live in the countryside-an average of 80% in Asia, up to 95% in some parts of Africa-and most of them are dependent on land for their living. Every poor country, without exception, has a far greater proportion of its population whose only means of livelihood is agriculture than in any other sector.

Urban poverty in the Third World is appalling, as anyone who has ever seen the teeming shanty towns mushrooming around the larger cities can readily attest. But most of the people the World Bank calls the "absolute poor" (with per capita incomes under \$ 70 a year) are to be found in the rural areas. Paradoxically, it is the very people who are living on the land who are not eating enough. They are the millions of

small-scale farmers, tenants, sharecroppers, serfs (in Latin America), squatters, frequently unemployed landless workers and their families. Three quarters of these 'absolute poor' live in Asia, but proportionally they are to be found all over the underdeveloped world. The Bank says they

.....are found in roughly equal proportions in densely populated zones and sparsely populated zones.....

there are over 80 million small holdings of less than 2 hectares which generate incomes below the absolute poverty line.....While the largest proportion of workers in agriculture is self-employed, the number of landless or near-landless workers is growing, especially in Asian countries.

Why can't these people make a living? Because the social inequities that obtain in their own countries make this physically impossible; they are held back because land-the equivalent of wealth in a UDC- is concentrated in so few hands. In South America overall, 17% of the landowners control 90% of the land. The situation is not quite so dramatically skewed in Asia where there are a lot more farms in the five-to fifty-hectare category. But even here, the top fifth of landowners control three-fifths of the arable land (and are gaining control over more every day). To describe the same situation from the opposite angle, in Latin America, over a third of the rural population must make do with just 1% of the cropland; in Africa, three quarters of the people have access to not quite 4% of the land. World Bank figures for 22 UDCs show that, on the average, fully a third of the 'active agricultural population' has no land at all.

It is, furthermore, the case for the three poor continents (especially Africa and South America) that the largest holdings produce the least food. A large landholder generally invests as little as possible in his farm and is content with a very low yield per hectare-why not if he owns thousands? The small farmer expends tender loving care on the little he possesses, giving mostly of his own labour, and the land returns the compliment. For example, in Argentina and Brazil where vast latifundia reign supreme, the smallest family farms produce, per hectare, more than eight times as much as the largest estates. In Colombia, Latin American champion in this category, the small producers are fourteen times as effective as the large ones in terms of output per hectare. In India, production per hectare is 40% higher on farms of less than five hectares than on those of more than fifty. In other words, existing social structures in the UDCs prohibit people from producing even a fraction of the food they could grow if only a small measure of justice were applied. The poor are neither 'shiftless' nor 'backward'- but they have almost nothing to work with. It is the land-tenure systems that are backward-and that are a major constraint upon the productivity of the Third World. Most proclaimed 'land reforms' in UDCs exist chiefly on paper.

Cash Crops

Many poor nations with people suffering from severe protein deficiency use their agricultural land to grow non-nutritional cash crops for export to the overfed nations. This is said to be necessary to earn foreign exchange. (What is done with this foreign exchange is yet another question.) The developing countries are however completely dependent on international prices which are controlled by the rich countries.

As Susan George rightly points out "The problem is that the 'actual volume of exports by the developing world has increased by over 30% in

the last 20 years, whilst their value, in real terms, has increased by only 4%.' Bangladesh, for instance, counts on jute for half its foreign currency. Jute's price falls because synthetics are often cheaper substitutes. Bangladesh has to sell jute for less just to maintain a market and as long as this downward trend continues (and if no structural change and agricultural diversification is attempted inside the country) this country will surely continue to merit its place as the world's number-one basket case. 'In 1963' says the Government of Tanzania, 'we needed to produce five tons of Sisal to buy a tractor. In 1970, we had to produce ten tons to buy the same tractor. Similarly, a rubber-exporting nation could buy six tractors for 25 tons of rubber in 1960 but today only two for the same effort. A cotton-growing Sahelian country has to produce two and a half times as much today as in 1960 to import the same low-priced French automobile. Cash crops have left the UDCs holding the bag-or the begging bowl.'

The UDCs devote their land to cash crops by simple arithmetic they take it away from possible food crops. As a consequence they neither have enough foreign exchange nor enough food. For food they have to depend on imports."

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- Excerpts from :
1. Muto Ichiyo "The Free Trade Zone and Mystique of Export Oriented Industrialisation" AMPO, Asia Quarterly Review, Special Issue on Free Trade Zones and Industrialisation of Asia, Tokyo, 1977, Pages 14, 16 & 17.
 2. Richard T. Barnett and Ronald E. Muller "Global Reach", New York, 1974, Pages 149, 152-184 (excerpts)
 3. William Moyer and Pamela Haines "How We Cause World Hunger", Mimeograph.
 4. Susan George "How the Other Half Dies", Pelican Books
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4 Six Myths of Hunger

joseph collins

frances moore lappe.

THERE IS NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WHERE PEOPLE COULD NOT FEED THEMSELVES FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES.

FOOD SECURITY CANNOT BE MEASURED IN GRAIN RESERVE OR PRODUCTION FIGURES.

A NATION'S PER CAPITA FOOD PRODUCTION CAN DOUBLE AND YET MORE PEOPLE CAN BE HUNGRY.

INCREASED PRICES FOR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS COULD LEAD TO INCREASED HUNGER.

Are you bewildered by any of these statements? We would not be surprised. For the last several years we have struggled to answer the question "why hunger?" Analysis that call for increasing or improving present development assistance or for reducing our consumption so that the hungry might eat left us with gnawing doubts. We probed and probed. We agonized over the logical consequences of what we were learning that seemed to put us in opposition to groups we previously had supported. But eventually we came to an understanding that feels liberating, that gives us energy instead of paralysing us with guilt, fear or despair. The pieces have begun to fit together for the first time.

Here we want to share the six myths that kept us locked into a misunderstanding of the problem as well as the alternative view that emerged once we began to grasp the real issues. Our hope is to help anchor the hunger movement with an unequivocal and cogent analysis. Only then will our collective potential no longer be dissipated.

MYTH ONE: PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY BECAUSE OF SCARCITY BOTH OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL LAND

Can scarcity seriously be considered the cause of hunger when even in the worst years of famine in the early 70's there was plenty to go around; enough in grain alone to provide everyone in the world over 3,000 calories a day, not counting all the beans, root crops, fruits, nuts, vegetables and non-grain-fed meats!

And what of land scarcity?

We looked at the most crowded countries in the world to see if we could find a correlation between land density and hunger. We could not. Bangladesh, for example, has just half the people per cultivated acre that Taiwan has. Yet Taiwan has no starvation while Bangladesh is thought of as the world's worst basketcase. China has twice as many people for each cultivated acre as India. Yet in China people are not hungry.

Finally, when the pattern of what is grown sank in, we simply could no longer subscribe to a "scarcity" diagnosis of hunger. In Central America and in the Caribbean, where as much as 70 percent of the children are undernourished, at least half of the agricultural land, and the best land at that, grows crops for export, not food for the local people.

In the Sahelian countries of sub-Saharan Africa, exports of cotton and peanuts in the early 1970's actually increased as drought and hunger loomed.

Next we asked: What solution emerges when the problem of hunger is defined as scarcity?

Most commonly, people see greater production as the answer. Thus techniques to increase production become the central focus: Supplying the "modern" inputs-large-scale irrigation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, machinery and the seeds dependent on these other inputs-all to make the land produce more. But when a new agricultural technology enters a system shot through with power inequalities, it brings greater profit only to those who already have some combination of land, money, credit "worthiness" and political influence. This alone has eliminated most of the world's rural population and all the world's hungry.

Once agriculture is viewed as growth industry in which the control of the basic inputs guarantees big money, a catastrophic chain of events is set into motion. Competition for land sends land values soaring (land values have jumped three to five times in the "Green Revolution" areas of India). Higher rents force tenants and sharecroppers into the ranks of the landless. With the new profits the powerful buy out small farmers gone bankrupt in part through having been forced to double or triple their indebtedness trying to partake of the new technology. Moreover, faced with a short planting and harvest time for vast acreages planted uniformly with the most profitable crop, large commercial growers mechanize to avoid the troublesome mobilization of human labor. Those made landless by the production focus, finding ever fewer agricultural jobs, join an equally hopeless search for work in urban slums.

Fewer and fewer people gain control over more and more land. In Sonora, Mexico, before the "Green Revolution" the average farm was 400 acres. After 20 years of publicly funded modernization, the average has climbed to 2,000 acres with some holdings running as large as 25,000 acres.

We pay the consequences. Total production per capita may be up yet so are the numbers who face hunger. A strategy to solve hunger by increasing production has led directly to increased inequality, in fact to the absolute decline in the welfare of the majority. A study now being completed by the ILO documents that in the very South Asian countries-Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia-where the focus has been on merely increasing the production and where indeed the Gross National Product per capita has risen*, the rural poor are absolutely worse off than before. The study concludes that "the increase in poverty has been associated not with a fall but with a rise in cereal production per head, the main component of the diet of the poor." These seven countries account for 70 percent of the rural population of the non-socialist underdeveloped world.

*Only Bangladesh did not experience a per capita rise in GNP. The pattern however is the same if not more dramatic, while the bottom 80% experienced a decline in income, the top 20% has managed to get richer.

But if the scarcity diagnosis, with the implied solution of increasing production by supplying the right technical inputs, has taken us not forward but backward, what is the right diagnosis?

We could answer that question only after our research at IFDP led us to conclude that there is no country without sufficient agricultural resources for the people to feed themselves and then save. And if they are not doing so, you can be sure there are powerful obstacles in the way. The prime obstacle is not, however inadequate production to be overcome by technical inputs. The obstacle is that the people do not control the productive resources. When control is in the hands of the producers, people will no longer appear as liabilities-as a drain on resources. People are potentially a country's most under-utilized resource and most valuable capital. People who know they are working for themselves will not only make the land produce but through their ingenuity and labor make it ever more productive. Human energy, properly motivated and organized, can transform a desert into a granary.

MYTH TWO: A HUNGRY WORLD SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD THE LUXURY OF JUSTICE FOR THE SMALL FARMER

We are made to believe that, if we want to eat, we had better rely on the large landowners. Thus governments, international lending agencies and foreign assistance programs have passed over the small producers, believing that concentrating on the large holders was the quickest road to production gains. A study of 83 countries that revealed that just over 3 percent of the land holders control about 80 percent of the farmland gave us some idea of how many of the world's farmers would be excluded by such a concentration.

In fact, the small farmer is commonly more productive, often many times more productive, than the larger farmer. A study of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala found the small farmer to be three to four times more productive per acre than the larger farmer. In Thailand plots of two to four acres yield almost sixty percent more rice per acre than farms of 140 acres or more. Other evidence that justifies that the small farmer increases production comes from the experience of countries in which the re-distribution of land and other basic agricultural resources like water has resulted in rapid growth in agricultural production: Japan, Taiwan, and China stand out.

We should not romanticize the peasant. He gets more out of the land precisely because he is desperate to survive on the meager resources allowed to him. Studies show that the smaller farmer plants more closely than would a machine, mixes and rotates complementary crops, chooses a combination of cultivation and livestock that is labour intensive and, above all, works his perceptibly limited resources to the fullest. The control of the land by the large holders for whom land is not the basis of daily sustenance invariably leads to its under utilization. In Colombia according to a 1960 study, the largest landowners control 70 percent of all agricultural land but actually cultivate only six percent. Worldwide studies of the "Green Revolution" have shown that even when the larger farmers are favored with heavy investment in the new seed-fertilizer technology, the net return per acre continues to be less on the large farms than on the small. The large amounts of work put into the small farms more than compensate for the big doses of capital investment on the large.

But where has the grip of the myth that justice and productivity are incompatible led us? As the large holders are reinforced, often with public investment in capital-intensive technologies, the small holders

and laborers have been cut out of production through the twin process of increasing land concentration and mechanization. And to be cut out of production is to be cut out of consumption.

As fewer and fewer have the wherewithal either to grow food or to buy food, the internal market for food stagnates or even shrinks. But large commercial farmers have not worried. They orient their production to high-paying markets- a few strata of urban dwellers and foreign consumers. Farmers in Sinaloa, Mexico, find they can make 20 times more growing tomatoes for Americans than corn for Mexicans. Development funds have irrigated the desert in Senegal so that multinational firms can grow eggplant and mangoes for air freighting to Europe's best tables. Colombian landholders shift from wheat to carnations that bring 80 times greater return per acre. In Costa Rica the lucrative export beef business expands as the local consumption of meat and dairy products declines. Throughout the non-socialist countries we find a consistent pattern: agriculture, once the livelihood for millions of self-provisioning farmers, is being turned into the production site for high-value non-essentials for the minority who can pay.

Moreover, entrusting agricultural production to the large farmers means invariably the loss of productive reinvestment in agriculture. Commonly profits of the large holders that might have gone to improve the land are spent instead on conspicuous consumption, investment in urban consumer industries or job-destroying mechanization. Study after study indicates that small farmers and secure tenants save at rates comparable to or greater than large farmers. Indeed it is only rural households with no land to cultivate who do not save.

It is not enough simply to deflate the myth that justice and production are incompatible. We must come to see clearly that the only solution to hunger is a conscious plan to reduce inequality at every level. The reality is that a just re-distribution of control over agricultural resources will decrease inequality and increase production; moreover, it is the only guarantee that the hungry will eat what is produced.

MYTH THREE: WE ARE NOW FACED WITH A SAD TRADE-OFF. A NEEDED INCREASE IN FOOD PRODUCTION CAN COME ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OUR FOOD BASE. FARMING MUST BE PUSHED ONTO MARGINAL LANDS AT THE RISK OF IRREPARABLE EROSION. AND THE USE OF PESTICIDES WILL HAVE TO BE INCREASED EVEN IF THE RISK IS GREAT

Is the need for food for a growing population the real pressure forcing people to farm lands that are easily destroyed?

Haiti offers a shocking picture of environmental destruction. The majority of the utterly impoverished peasants ravage the once-green mountain slopes in near-futile efforts to grow food to survive. Has food production for Haitians used up every easily cultivated acre so that only the mountain slopes are left? No. These mountain peasants must be seen as exiles from their birthright-some of the world's richest agricultural land. The rich valley lands belong to a handful of elites who seek dollars in order to live an imported lifestyle and to their American partners. These lands are thus made to produce largely low-nutrition and feed crops (sugar, coffee, cocoa, alfalfa for cattle) and exclusively for export. Grazing land is export-oriented too. Recently U.S. firms began to fly Texas cattle into Haiti for grazing and re-export to American franchised hamburger restaurants.

A world Bank study of Colombia states that "large number of farm

families...try to eke out an existence on too little land, often on slopes of... 45 degrees or more. As a result, they exploit the land very severely, adding to erosion and other problems, and even so are not able to make a decent living". Overpopulation? No. Colombia's good level land is in the hands of absentee landlords who use it to graze cattle, raise animal feed and even flowers for export to the United States (\$ 18 million worth in 1975).

In Africa vast tracts of geologically old sediments perfectly suitable for permanent crops such as grazing grasses or trees have instead been torn up for planting cotton and peanuts for export. In parts of Senegal peanut monoculture has devastated the soils.

The Amazon is being rapidly de-forested. Is it the pressure of Brazil's exploding population? Brazil's ratio of cultivatable land to people (and that excludes the Amazon forest) is slightly better than that of the United States. The Amazon forest is being destroyed not because of shortage of farm land but because the military government refuses to break up the large estates that take up over 43 percent of the country's farmland. Instead the landless are offered the promise of future new frontiers in the Amazon basin even though most experts feel the tropical forest is not suited to permanent cropping.

In addition, multinational corporations like Anderson Clayton, Good-year, Volkswagen, Nestle, Liquigas, Borden, Mitsubishi and multi-billionaire Daniel Ludwig's Universe Tank Ship Co. can get massive government subsidies to turn the Amazon into a major supplier of beef to Europe, the U.S. and Japan.

It is not, then, people's food needs that threaten to destroy the environment but other forces: land monopolizers that export non-food and luxury crops forcing the rural majority to abuse marginal lands; colonial patterns of cash cropping that continue today; hoarding and speculation on food; and irresponsible profit-seeking by both local and foreign elite. Cutting the number of the hungry in half tomorrow would not stop any of these forces.

Still we found ourselves wondering whether people's legitimate need to grow food might not require injecting even more pesticides into our environment. In the emergency push to grow more food, won't we have to accept some level of damage from deadly chemicals?

First, just how pesticide-dependent is the world's current food production? In the U.S. about 1.2 billion pounds, a whopping six pounds for every American and 30 percent of the world's total, are dumped into the environment every year. Surely, we thought, such a staggering figure means that practically every acre of the nation's farmland is dosed with deadly poisons. U.S. food abundance, therefore, appeared to us as the plus that comes from such a big minus. The facts, however, proved us wrong.

Fact one: Nearly half the pesticides are used not by farmland but by golf courses, parks and lawns.

Fact two: Only about ten percent of the nation's cropland is treated with insecticides, 30 percent with weedkillers and less than one percent with fungicides (the figures are halved if pastureland is counted).

Fact three: Non-Food crops account for over half of all insecticides used in U.S. agriculture. (Cotton alone received almost half of all insecticides used. Yet half of the total cotton acreage receives no insecticides at all.)

Fact four: The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that, even if all pesticides were eliminated, crop loss due to pests (insects, pathogens, weeds, mammals and birds) would rise only about seven percentage points, from 33.6 percent to 40.7 percent.

Fact five: Numerous studies show that where pesticides are used with ever greater intensity crop losses due to pests are frequently increasing.

Fact six: Several recent studies indicate great quantities of pesticides applied annually to crop lands are used needlessly.

What about underdeveloped countries? Do pesticides there help produce food for hungry people?

In underdeveloped countries most pesticides are used for export crops, principally cotton, and to a lesser extent fruits and vegetables grown under plantation conditions for export. In effect, then, enclaves of pesticide use in the underdeveloped world function as mere extensions of the agricultural systems of the industrialized countries. The quantities of pesticides injected into the world's environment have little to do with the hungry's food needs.

The alternatives to chemical pesticides—crop rotation, mixed cropping, mulching, hand weeding, hoeing, collection of pest eggs, manipulation of natural predators, and so on—are numerous and proven effective. In China, for example, pesticide use can be minimized because of a nationwide early warning system. In Shao-tung country in Honan Province, 10,000 youths make up watch teams that patrol the fields and report any sign of pathogenic change. Appropriately called the "barefoot doctors of agriculture", they have succeeded in reducing the damage of wheat rust and rice borer to less than one percent and have the locust invasions under control. But none of these safe techniques for pest control will be explored as long as the problem is in the hands of profit-oriented corporations. The alternatives require human involvement and the motivation of farmers who have the security of individual or collective tenure over the land they work.

MYTH FOUR: HUNGER IS A CONTEST BETWEEN THE RICH WORLD AND THE POOR WORLD

Terms like "hungry world" and "poor world" make us think of uniformly hungry masses. They hide the reality of vertically stratified societies in which hunger afflicts the lower rungs in both so-called developed and underdeveloped countries. Terms like these turn hunger into a place—and usually a place over there. Rather than being a result of a social process, hunger becomes a static fact, a geographic given.

Worse still, the all-inclusiveness of these labels leads us to assume that everyone living in a "hungry country" has a common interest in eliminating hunger. Thus we look at an underdeveloped country and assume its government officials represent the hungry majority. Well-meaning sympathizers in the industrialized countries then believe that concessions to these governments, e.g., preference schemes or increased foreign investment, represent progress for the hungry when in fact the "progress" may be only for the elites and their partners, the multinational corporations.

Moreover, the "rich world" versus "poor world" scenario makes the hungry appear as a threat to the material well-being of the majority in the metropolitan countries. To average Americans or Europeans the hungry become the enemy who, in the words of Lyndon Johnson, "want what we got." In truth, however, hunger will never be arrested until the

average citizens in the Metropolitan countries can see that the hungry abroad are their allies, not their enemies.

What are the links between the plight of the average citizen in the metropolitan countries and the poor majority in the underdeveloped countries? There are many, one example is multinational agribusiness shifting production of luxury items-fresh vegetables, fruits, flowers and meat-out of the industrial countries in search of cheap land and labor in the underdeveloped countries. The result? Farmers and workers in the metropolitan countries lose their jobs while agricultural resources in the underdeveloped countries are increasingly diverted away from food for local people. The food supply of those in the metropolitan countries is being made dependent on the active maintenance of political and economic structures that block hungry people from growing food for themselves.

Nor should we conclude that consumers in the metropolitan countries at least get cheaper food. Do Ralston Purina's and Green Giant's mushrooms grown in Korea and Taiwan sell for less than those produced inside? Not one cent, according to a U.S. Government study. Del Monte and Dole Philippine pineapples actually cost the U.S. consumers more than those produced by a small company in Hawaii.

The common threat is the worldwide tightening control of wealth and power over the most basic human need, food. Multinational agribusiness firms right now are creating a single world agricultural system in which they exercise integrated control over all stages of production from farm to consumer. Once achieved, they will be able to effectively manipulate supply and prices for the first time on a world-wide basis through well-established monopoly practices. As farmers, workers and consumers, people everywhere already are beginning to experience the costs in terms of food availability, prices and quality.

MYTH FIVE: AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY'S BEST HOPE FOR DEVELOPMENT IS TO EXPORT THOSE CROPS IN WHICH IT HAS A NATURAL ADVANTAGE AND USE THE EARNINGS TO IMPORT FOOD AND INDUSTRIAL GOODS

There is nothing "natural" about the underdeveloped countries' concentration on a few, largely low-nutrition crops. The same land that grows cocoa, coffee, rubber, tea and sugar could grow an incredible diversity of nutritious crops-grains, high-protein legumes, vegetables and fruits.

Nor is there any advantage. Reliance on a limited number of crops generates economic as well as political vulnerability. Extreme price fluctuations associated with tropical crops combine with the slow-maturing nature of plants themselves (many, for example, take two to ten years before the first harvest) to make development planning impossible.

Often-quoted illustrations showing how much more coffee or bananas it takes to buy one tractor today than 20 years ago have indeed helped us appreciate that the value of agricultural exports has simply not kept pace with the inflating price of imported manufactured goods. But even if one considers only agricultural trade, the underdeveloped countries still come out the clear losers. Between 1961 and 1972 half of the metropolitan countries increased their earnings from agricultural exports by 10 percent each year. By contrast, at least 18 underdeveloped countries are earning less from their agricultural exports than they did in 1961.

Another catch in the natural advantage theory is that the people who need food are not the same people who benefit from foreign exchange earned

by agricultural exports. Even when part of the foreign earnings is used to import food, the food is not basic staples but items geared toward the eating habits of the better-off urban classes. In Senegal the choice land is used to grow peanuts and vegetables for export to Europe. Much of the foreign exchange earned is spent to import wheat for foreign-owned bakeries that turn out European-style bread for the urban dwellers. The country's rural majority goes hungry, deprived of land they needed to grow millet and other traditional grains for themselves and the local markets.

The very success of export agriculture can further undermine the position of the poor. When commodity prices go up, small self-provisioning farmers may be pushed off the land by cash crop producers seeking to profit on the higher commodity prices. Moreover, governments in underdeveloped countries, opting for a development track dependent on promoting agricultural exports, may actively suppress social reform. Minimum wage laws for agricultural laborers are not enacted, for example, because they might make the country's export "uncompetitive." Governments have been only too willing to exempt plantations from land reform in order to encourage their export production.

Finally, export-oriented agricultural operations invariably import capital-intensive technologies to maximize yields as well as to meet product and processing specifications. Relying on imported technologies then makes it likely that the production will be used to pay the bill—a vicious circle of dependency.

Just as export-oriented agriculture spells the divorce of agriculture and nutrition, food first policies would make the central questions: How can the people best feed themselves with this land? As obvious as it may seem; this policy of basing land use on nutritional output is practiced in only a few countries today; more commonly, commercial farmers and national planners make hit-and-miss calculations of which crop might have a few cents edge on the world market months or even years hence. With food first policies industrial crops (like cotton and rubber) and feed crops would be planted only after the people meet their basic needs. Livestock would not compete with people but graze on marginal lands or, like China's 240 million pigs, recycle farm and household wastes while producing fertilizer at the same time.

In most underdeveloped countries the rural population contributes much more to the national income than it receives. With food first policies agricultural development would be measured in the welfare of the people, not in export income. Priority would go to de-centralized industry at the service of labor-intensive agriculture. A commitment to food self-reliance would close the gap between rural and urban well-being, making the countryside a good place to live. Also urban dwellers, like those volunteering to grow vegetables in Cuba's urban "green belts," would move toward self-reliance.

Food self-reliance is not isolationist. But trade would be seen, not as the one desperate hinge on which survival hangs, but as a way to widen choices once the basic needs have been met.

MYTH SIX: HUNGER SHOULD BE OVERCOME BY RE-DISTRIBUTING FOOD

Over and over again we hear that North America is the world's last remaining breadbasket. Food security is invariably measured in terms of reserves held by the metropolitan countries. We are made to feel the burden of feeding the world is squarely on us. Our overconsumption is tirelessly contrasted with the deprivation elsewhere with the implicit

message being that we cause their hunger. No wonder that North Americans and Europeans feel burdened and thus resentful. "What did we do to cause their hunger?"

The problem lies in seeing food redistribution as the solution to hunger. We have come to a different understanding. Distribution of food is but a reflection of the control of the resources that produce food. Who controls the land determines who can grow food, what is grown and where it goes. Who can grow: a few or all who need to? What is grown; luxury, nonfood, or basic staples? Where does it go: to the hungry or the world's well-fed?

Thus redistribution programs like food aid, will never solve the problem of hunger. Instead we must face up to the real question: How can people everywhere begin to democratize the control of food resources?

Six Food First Principles

We can now counter these six myths with six positive principles that could ground a coherent and vital movement:

1. There is no country in the world in which the people could not feed themselves from their own resources. But hunger can only be overcome by the transformation of social relationships and only made worse by the narrow focus on technical inputs to increase production.
2. Inequality is the greatest stumbling block to development.
3. Safeguarding the world's agricultural environment and people feeding themselves are complementary goals.
4. Our food security is not threatened by the hungry masses but by elites that span all market economies profiting by the concentration and internationalization of control of food resources.
5. Agriculture must not be used as the means to export income but as the way for people to produce food first for themselves.
6. Escape from hunger comes not through the redistribution of food but through the redistribution of control over food-producing resources.

What would an international campaign look like that took these truths to be self-evident?

If we begin with the knowledge that people can and will feed themselves if allowed to do so, the question for all of us living in the metropolitan countries is not "What can we do for them?" but "How can we remove the obstacles in the way of people taking control of the production process and feeding themselves?"

Since some of the key obstacles are being built with our taxes, in our name, and by corporations based in our economies, our task is very clear:

Stop any economic aid-government, multilateral or voluntary- that reinforces the use of land for export crops. Stop support for agribusiness penetration into food economies abroad through tax incentives and from governments and multilateral lending agencies: Stop military and counter-insurgency assistance to underdeveloped countries; if it is used to oppose the changes necessary for food self-reliance.

Work to build a more self-reliant food economy at home so that we become even less dependent on importing food from hungry people. Work for

land reform at home. Support worker-managed producers and distributors to counter the increasing concentration of control over our food resources.

Educate, showing the connections between the way government and corporate power works against the hungry abroad and the way it works against the food interests of the vast majority of people in the industrial countries.

Counter despair. Publicize the fact that 40 percent of all people living in underdeveloped countries live where hunger has been eliminated through common struggle. Learn and communicate the efforts of newly liberated countries in Africa and Asia to reconstruct their agriculture along the principles of food first self-reliance.

Right now in every country there is a struggle going on over who controls food resources. We must evaluate every one of our actions in light of these struggles. The very existence of these struggles- about which we are kept so ignorant-proves that people are never too oppressed to fight for power over their own lives.

Speaking of changes they want to undertake, Mang Pedring starts, I went with a group once to Santa Barbara town. There the landlords and the government have a model farm as they call it. They showed us around with the hope of our imitating the modern methods of production that are used there.

I tell you, my friends, I was kind of impressed with that model farm except, perhaps, that I asked too many questions. I asked for the cost of the irrigation pump, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and what have you. I also noticed that they used what looked to me like a mosquito net-well, a net really, which they explained was necessary to keep the birds from eating the seeds.

When my landlord visited me the week after, he asked why I was not about to adopt some of the modern methods I saw in Santa Barbara. Of course, he also took the opportunity to remind me that I am poor because I am resistant to change. The worse part, however, was when I answered him by saying: I can't even afford to buy a mosquito net for my kids, how could I possibly afford to buy that net for the seeds? I tell you, at that point, he threatened to evict me from the land.

From that time on, says Mang Pedring, I have been thinking and thinking about this "resistance-to-change" accusation. And I say it now clearly: it is the landlords and the government who are resistant to change!

They only want us to undertake surface changes. But they refuse to accept the most fundamental change of all which we and our ancestors have demanded for years and years now. I mean have they not done everything to fight our demand for a change in the ownership of the land?

When Peasants Speak Out



5 | Politics of Charity

jorgen lissner

The Basic Issue

"The world to hell is paved with good intentions?" said the political activist; "It's the end result that counts, and your type of bandaid treatment doesn't cure any fundamental ills at all".

"Our business is to help people in need", answered the voluntary agency boss, "and if you question the way we go about it, you're only playing into the hands of those who couldn't care less about the Third World. Frankly, I am tired of all your talk about fundamental causes and structural change. Cut out the arm-chair preaching for a second and tell me exactly how you hope to achieve your lofty goals. Moral denunciations won't fill any empty stomachs, and the Third World just can't wait till the Kingdom comes for your master plan to workout."

"Don't try to tell me there's no down-to-earth alternative to your handouts", the activist replies. "The basic trouble with you guys in the charity industry is that you don't have the guts to do unconventional things which might put off some of your 'respectable' contributors."

"Oh Yes?," says the agency boss. "I'd love to see one of your in-durable puritans go shopping for seed and medicine with clean hands and empty pockets..."

This dialogue happens to be fictitious, but it reflects some of the very real dilemmas facing everybody involved in voluntary development activities in the high-income countries. It illustrates the fact that there is such a thing as a politics of altruism. Voluntary aid is neither a purely "technical" matter nor immaculate humanitarianism.

Helping People is a Political Act

All but the most pighead cynics will admit that there is such a thing as altruism which is inspiring people to invest time and money in helping others without any hope of tangible return; the very existence of voluntary agencies is evidence of this. But altruistic intentions must be translated into concrete actions; and in a world of conflicting interests that means making choices which are political, accepting compromises which are debatable, and influencing public opinions in one direction rather than other. In other words helping people is a political art, just as politics is a way of helping people.

In recent years, more than one billion dollars annually have been raised for relief and development via voluntary contributions in the western countries. So they are not insignificant bodies. Which politics of altruism do they actually pursue?

Close observation of Voluntary agency actions in the high-income nations reveal that they behave in many (but not all) respects like western political parties. They try to appeal to as many contributors as possible, just as a political party tries to appeal to as many voters as possible; hence both type of organisations tend to follow middle-of-the-road policies and eschew what "the silent majority" might consider "extremist" positions.

Diluting One's Own Convictions

Even so, most voluntary agencies and political parties, hold certain convictions that are unpopular or controversial to important segments of the population. Both are therefore torn between their desire to propagate these convictions and their desires to maximise their support in the form of income or votes (which requires playing down those convictions or even keeping quiet about them) knowing that the certain way to antagonise many people is to take an unequivocal stand on an issue of importance, quite a few agencies and parties solve this dilemma by couching their convictions in vague and ambiguous terms.

Both agencies and parties tend to be persuaders rather than impartial sources of information. They often provide only those facts which are favourable to their cause, i.e., facts which induce people to support them with cash or votes. This does not imply that they provide false information, only that they do not necessarily tell the whole truth.

The True Motives Guiding the Decisions of Voluntary Agencies

But what is actually "the cause" of voluntary agencies? Obviously, they have a number of much publicized operational objectives in the Third World, they aim at helping people to help themselves through community development, rural cooperatives, vocational training, health programmes, etc. But like all other human institutions they have some (less advertised) organisational objectives too. Drawing on empirical evidence of agency actions and on certain theories about political party behaviour, one arrives at the conclusion that the decisions of voluntary agencies are guided in particular by the following three factors:

1. A desire to maximise the influence of agency convictions on public opinion;
2. A desire to maximise agency income;
3. A desire to maximise agency respectability and leverage.

In this situation there is no conflict between these three objectives; the more public is influenced by agency appeals to take an active interest in the fate of the Third World, the more agencies manage to boost their income, the more respectability and leverage they are likely to get.

But in other (increasingly frequent) situations there is no harmony of objectives. An agency committed to development at the grass-root level may be convinced that some of their most valuable counterparts in the Third World are particular mass movements (e.g. peasant associations, slum dweller organisations or liberation movements).

But if they come out openly in favour of such partners, they are likely to eliminate a number of contributors who have little love left for what they see as "radical agitators" or "agents of violence".

Similarly, an agency which is convinced that the economic and military policies of the rich world strongly aggravate (or even cause) many of the poor world's problems, it is likely to find its efforts to maxi-

mise income towards it (if it professed conviction loudly and clearly) very difficult. In 1973 Oxfam published an advertisement stating that "coffee is grown in poor developing countries like Brazil, Columbia and Uganda. But that doesn't stop rich countries like Britain exploiting their economic weakness by paying as little for their raw coffee as we can get away with!". One of the many critical responses came from a family, writing: "we all support Oxfam here and will continue to do so but we are not to be blamed for the plight of these countries". Others were less loyal to the agency; they announced the end of their contributions to Oxfam. It is not easy to raise funds from people who feel rubbed the wrong way.

Giving Way To Opportunism

So, voluntary agencies are quite often faced with an uneasy choice; either they stand publicly by controversial convictions at the risk of losing income, or they sacrifice convictions and let the need for cash dominate. In extreme cases, this can become a straight forward choice between integrity and opportunism. But more often it is a question of striking a reasonable balance between the short-term need for cash to finance sorely needed assistance programmes in the Third World and the long-term need to foster a stable commitment within the high-income countries to (presently unpopular) policies and actions which will permanently reduce injustice and human suffering in the world.

Looking at the activities of the mainstream voluntary agencies in the mid 1970's one can hardly avoid the conclusion that opportunism is a greater threat to the credibility and efficacy of voluntary agencies today than dogmatism. This is seen nowhere as clearly as in the field of agencies' education of supporters. This covers not only their communication with the public, including fund-raising appeals. Many have come a long way from the simplistic presentations of the development problem which dominated in the 1960's but there is still a long way to go before voluntary agencies in general can claim to "tell the whole truth".

Interpreting Third World's Poverty to the Rich Nations

How do they actually present the Third World and its problems to the public? What kind of diagnosis of the "disease of poverty" do they provide? And what is the basic impression retained in people's minds, when all the details and nuances are forgotten? After having read several thousand agency publications in English, French, German and Scandinavian, I would summarise the typical agency "message" as follows:

1. The Third World's problems are basically internal ones, caused by factors within the Third World such as rapid population growth, low agricultural productivity, hostile forces of nature, or insensitive governments.
2. The economic and political forces which produce the wealth and affluence of the rich are practically unrelated to the forces which cause the impoverishment of the Third World. The present standard of living of the rich is by and large a result of their own efforts or good fortune. The prevailing economic world order has a few shortcomings but is not necessary and inevitably biased against the have nots.
3. The main fault of the rich in the high-income countries (if they are at fault at all) is not that they cause or aggravate poverty in the Third World but that they allow it to continue. The rich are to blame, not for any sins of commission but for their sins of omission (e.g. not giving enough to voluntary agencies)

4. The overriding attention of persons concerned about Third World development must be focussed on the expenditure side of the rich world's balance sheet; the receipt side of that balance sheet is unimportant in this context. Morally the important thing is how the rich spend their money, not how they earn it.

Voluntary agencies rarely express themselves as bluntly as this, and the individual message may include more nuances and details. But in the long run nuances and details get blurred and are forgotten; what remains is the basic outlook, the fundamental understanding of the situation described above.

Self Justification

No one will dispute that quite a few Third World problems are caused by internal factors, and that a substantial part of the rich world's wealth is derived from technological advances for which European and North American scientists can take exclusive credit. But such facts hardly justify ignoring or glossing over the extensive exploitation of the Third World which took place during the colonial era or (if that is not accepted as a historical fact) the many subtle and non-so-subtle ways in which the rich countries today take advantage of the weak bargaining position of the poor countries (of decisions in international meetings such as GATT, IMF and UNCTAD as well as the nature of commodity agreements, investment incentives etc.). The tendency to exonerate people in the rich countries of co-responsibility for poverty and human suffering in the Third World is naturally strongest in those organisations that consciously or unconsciously have opted for income maximization as their primary goal. They inevitably develop a seemingly sound explanation as to why the highest possible agency income is in the best interest of everybody, including the Third World. Before long this explanation takes on all the characteristics of an ideology, i.e. it becomes a set of ideas and concepts deriving from systematically motivated, unconscious, distortions of reality. In their single minded pursuit of income maximisation they see only those aspects of reality which affirm their position (a psychological process to which everybody is subject, even the critics of voluntary agencies!). In his book "Blame the Victim" the American social psychologist William Ryan presents a most thought provoking analysis of the ideology which seems to dominate many social welfare organisations in America. His observations are equally applicable to the ideology of income maximising development agencies.

An Ideology that Shifts the Blame On The Poor

"We cannot comfortably believe that we are the cause of that which is problematic to us; therefore, we are almost compelled to believe that they-the problematic ones-are the cause.... Blaming the victim is, of course, quite different from old-fashioned conservative ideologies. The latter simply dismissed victims as inferior, genetically defective, or morally unfit.

The new ideology attributes defect and inadequacy to the malignant nature of poverty, injustice, slum life, and racial difficulties. The stigma that marks the victim and accounts for his victimisation is an acquired stigma, a stigma of social, rather than genetic origin. But the stigma, the defect, the fatal difference-though derived in the past from environmental forces is still located within the victim inside his skin (...). It is a brilliant ideology for justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, as one might expect, but rather society's victim(...)

Why do Victim blamers, who are usually good people, blame the Victim? ...The problem is that of reconciling their own self-interest with the prompting of their humanitarian impulses.

They cannot side with an openly reactionary, repressive position that accepts continued oppression and exploitation as the price of privileged position for his own class(...) They are if anything more allergic to radicals, however, than they are to reactionaries. They reject the "extreme" solution of radical social change, and this makes sense since such radical social change threatens their own well being. A more equitable distribution of income would mean that they would have less... Their solution is a brilliant compromise. They turn their attention to the victim in his post-victimized state. They want to bind up wounds, inject pencillin, administer morphine and evacuate the wounded for rehabilitation. They explain what's wrong with the victim in terms of social experiences in the past, experiences that have left wounds, defects, paralysis. They want to make victims less vulnerable, send them back into battle with better weapons, thicker armour, a higher level of morale.

This is the solution of the dilemma, the solution of blaming the victim. And those who buy this solution with a sigh of relief are inevitably blinding themselves to the basic cause of the problems being addressed. They are, most crucially, rejecting the possibility of blaming, not the victims, but themselves. They are all unconsciously passing judgement on themselves and bringing in a unanimous verdict of Not Guilty.

The Education Debate

Since the 1960's lively debate has been carried on within a number of voluntary agencies concerning their educational responsibility in the poor countries. For a while the predominant question was whether they should embark on educational activities and if so how much money and manpower they should set aside for them. Some agencies decided against having any educational programmes, maintaining that this is not their business. Others launched educational programmes aimed directly at securing a long-term-fund-raising potential within their constituency: their efforts focussed on communicating the familiar message that "the problems are all out their", and that "what is good for our agency's treasury is good for the Third World".

But among the most self-critical agencies questions of "whether or not" and "how much" were gradually overshadowed by much hotter questions: What image of the third world do we actually project? What cure are we consciously or unconsciously recommending to those many people who rely on us for guidance? Are we in fact "blaming the Victim" for the sake of income maximisation-or are we being honest about the rich world's long-term interests and our agency's own integrity.

Telling Unpleasant Truths

Agencies taking such questions seriously have generally concluded that some unpleasant truths about the harmful actions of the rich nations have to be told. But how? A few agencies have tackled the problem head on and launched educational activities that deliberately focus nearer home to identify some of the crucial causes of human suffering in the Third World (e.g. the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches). It has been a risky venture, and some (but not all) have suffered minor losses of income. But a majority of these education conscious agencies have opted for a different solution, described in the following words by Mildred Nevile of the Catholic Institute for International Relations:

".... instead of confronting the political issues directly themselves, the agencies encouraged-even financed-other groups to do the political work for them. Some of these groups are very much

in existence today. But, from the point of view of public involvement in political issues, the stance of the agencies themselves (with some exceptions) remains unchanged. In some cases it even became less explicit, and I think to most of them this was a great relief-the pressure was now off."

Education by Proxy ?

This solution which could be called "education by proxy" has been applied in various ways in a number of western countries, e.g. in New Zealand through CORSO in Canada through "Ten days for World Development", and in Sweden through the Development Week (U. Veckan). In Britain, the same function is served by VOCAD, the World Development Movement-and the New Internationalist. It was somewhat puzzling however, that most of the agencies which sponsored such initiatives still maintain their own educational programmes. Is that because they want to promote "progressive" education without jeopardizing their own fund-raising efforts and without becoming dependent on the educational services of organisations which may not always toe the line?

Education by proxy is seen by some as a creative innovation, one that stimulates debate and self-criticism in the rich countries without antagonizing or alienating the agency constituencies. The agencies satisfy their left-of-centre supporters by backing such initiatives; at the same time the agencies are able to appease their conservative and moderate supporters by assurances that the actions and views of the proxies are not "officially endorsed", by having their eggs in two separate baskets, so that the argument goes, the agencies avoid the risk of breaking them all at once in the event of controversy.

But others have grave doubts as to the virtues of this method. Experience shows, they claim, that the operational parent agencies have little difficulty raising funds for their generally appealingly and "Photogenic" activities overseas, whereas their educational "off springs" are underfunded because their activities at home are unpopular or little understood-not least as a result of the parent agencies past (mis-) educational policies. Another objection is that separate organisations tend to develop different perspectives, different identities and different objectives. Communication is hampered and may even break down, resulting in alienation or even animosity. What may have started as a purely practical division of labour thus ends up dividing the constituency as well.

A New and More Truthful Solution

Voluntary agencies that are open to the need of an enlightened public in the rich countries are seemingly faced with two alternatives: either they embark on a drastic change of education directly or by proxy. Both solutions have draw-backs, as indicated above. However, a very interesting third option has been developed by the Belgian agency 'Entraide et Fraternite' in Brussels. A few years ago this agency launched a Lenten Campaign entitled "operation 3 troncs" ("tronc"=collection box). The basic idea was to provide the constituency with a conscious choice: money earmarked for box 1 would go to "Humanitarian development projects in the Third World", money for box 2 would support "awareness-building at home" (e.g. in Belgium itself) and money in box 3 was designated for "support of oppressed people" (e.g. through liberation movements).

The primary focus of the campaign was educational but the fund-raising aspect was prominent, too. The results of this campaign are highly interesting; the idea was tested in a small area in 1973 but has been applied nation-wide in Belgium in the three following years. The financial results were encouraging, and the contributions were distributed

in the following proportions:

	1974	1975
Box 1	62.6%	50.8%
Box 2	8.6%	10.1%
Box 3	12.5%	18.6%
Undesignated	16.0%	20.3%

Unfortunately, the figures for 1976 are not yet available, but the trend from 1974 to 1975 is reported to have continued: donations to the "controversial" activities of boxes 2 and 3 have gone up proportionately at the expense of the "traditional" programme of box 1.

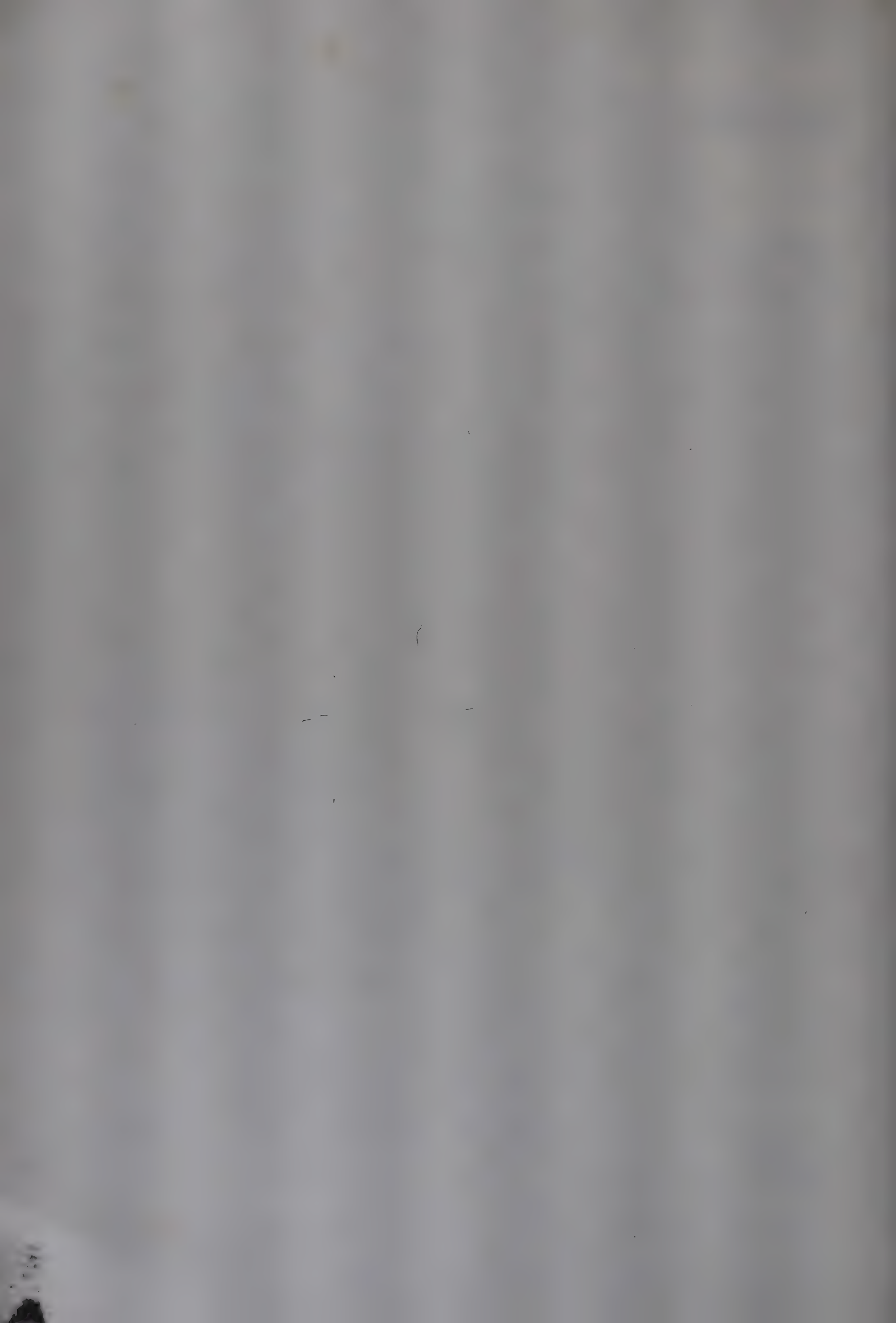
This Belgian experiment opens up the possibility that voluntary agencies may be able to both have their cake and eat it too. By endorsing humanitarian aid and aid to oppressed people's situations of conflict, as well as self-critical education "at home" as inseparable elements of one and the same commitment. Entraide et Fraternite remains honest and faithful to its convictions. At the same time it challenges its supporters to ask new questions and seek new ways of doing things without imposing its readymade solutions on them.

Perhaps there is yet time for a new and more honest politics of altruism.....



SECTION II

ASIAN SCENE



Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia A Summary

This study is based on ten empirical studies on rural poverty carried out in seven major 'market' (i.e. non socialist) countries. The countries are Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. These trends have been counterposed with the experience of China in creating an egalitarian rural income distribution through land reform and collectivisation. Two points however need to be kept in mind before drawing major conclusions.

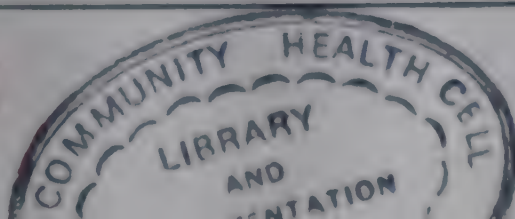
- a. The data on China is 'less reliable' than the data for the other countries where the articles have been prepared on the basis of the authors' own research.
- b. The collection does not include a study of Taiwan where it appears that income inequality in rural areas is significantly less than in the rest of Asia and that overall inequality and poverty have declined.

This study is an attempt to analyse the facts and trends concerning rural poverty. While the results are not uniform, and therefore generalisations have been avoided, one major conclusion which emerges is 'sustained growth in a country can be accompanied by continuing poverty of certain groups of people, in that their income in real terms can remain stagnant or even fall. This observation demonstrates that even under conditions of overall growth the benefits do not always "trickle down" to those most in need.

In fact, some of these case studies seem to support the view that in certain Asian countries the incomes of the rural poor have been falling absolutely, or that the proportion of the rural population living below a designated poverty line has been increasing, or both. In any case there are indications that the process of growth may have tended to increase relative inequality.

Some Preliminary Remarks

The most outstanding facts to be noted are the worsening distribution of income and the declining real income of the rural poor at least in a number of cases. Those studies which contain the relevant data show that the shares of the lower decile groups in aggregate income and consumption have been declining even during periods of relatively rapid agricultural growth. There are significant differences from country to country as regards the proportion of population that has been adversely affected, but in each country for which data exist, a substantial proportion of the lowest income groups appear to have experienced a decline in their share of real income over time.



- i. In each case a significant proportion of low income households experienced an absolute decline in real income. This is true whether the 'poverty line' is defined on the basis of a minimum nutritional diet or if the relative position of the lower deciles on the income scale are examined across a time period.
- ii. In most countries for which measurements could be obtained, real wages of agricultural labourers either remained constant or experienced a downward trend.
- iii. The major improvement in the distribution of income in rural China occurred mainly as a result of the early land reforms and the later collectivisation. Without these two steps it would have been difficult to prevent a tendency towards polarisation of income and wealth. It is significant that all the other countries suggested are characterized by a highly unequal distribution of land ownership.
- iv. The continuation of highly unequal ownership of land during a period of rapid demographic growth has increased in increased landlessness and near landlessness.

Analysis

A salient characteristic of the countries studied is that many of the resources needed for development are at hand, but unutilised or poorly utilised. Foremost among these are the intelligence, ingenuity and effort of the labour force itself. A small part of the rural labour force is openly unemployed, particularly during the slack season. In addition, a larger part of the workforce is underemployed in the sense that it is engaged in tasks with a very low level of productivity. Most important, perhaps is the low productivity and occasionally low intensity of work arising from no motivation, poor health and injustice that are often found in rural areas. The exploitation and inequality from which a majority of the rural population suffers is demoralising, endangers resentment and stifles initiative and creativity. The effect is not only to lower current output and its potential but to reduce the capacity and the willingness of the population to innovate.

Labour is the only resource that is poorly utilised; in many countries land and other natural resources are not efficiently exploited. This can easily be seen in the length of the period for which land, specially on larger farms, is allowed to lie fallow. The same is true for capital resources. Large irrigation facilities are not used to capacity, canals and drainage ditches fall into disrepair, equipment becomes inoperative because of poor maintenance etc.

Latent within these inefficiencies and inequities are possibilities for higher output, faster growth and greater equality. The potential for rural development, however, has lain dormant. Instead of growing prosperity for those most in need there has been increasing poverty for many. The crucial question is why?

Poverty and Food Production

It is certainly not the case that the increasing poverty of many of the poor is mainly due to general stagnation in Asia, or worse-economic decline. On the contrary, all but one of the seven countries surveyed have enjoyed a rise in average incomes in recent years.

Excluding Bangladesh, between 1960 and 1973, G.N.P. per head increased between 1.3 percent a year (in India) and 3.9 percent in

(Malaysia). Yet the incomes of the poor fell in both countries as well as the others. The claim that the growing poverty of Asia is due to a world food shortage or to a failure of food production in Asia to keep up with demographic trends also needs to be questioned.

Food output per head, or cereal output per head have modestly but noticeably increased during the last two decades. While there have been periodic scarcities, there is no indication that the world is moving towards a Malthusian trap. Only in Bangladesh has the population expanded faster than domestic food production. But since poverty has increased even in countries which enjoyed a rapid expansion of food production, one must conclude that the connection between the two is tenuous.

The Structure of the Economy

The answer to why the poverty of the poorest groups has increased has more to do with the structure of the economy than its rate of growth. One structural feature common to all the countries studied is a high degree of inequality. The data suggest that in the economy as a whole the richest 20 percent of household receive about half the incomes, whereas the poorest 40 percent receive between 12 to 18 percent of the total income. The bottom 20 percent fare even worse, receiving between 3.8 and 7 percent of the income. This is true of both urban and rural areas, though the degree of inequality in rural areas is slightly less.

The counterpart to the compression of the income of the poor is the concentration of economic surplus in the hands of a minority. How and where these groups dispose of this surplus determines the pace and composition of economic growth.

The inequity in the ownership and access to resources is further compounded by the structure of the factor market. The richer people have better access to, say the capital market, where the real rate of interest is nominal. Consequently there is a tendency to invest in more capital intensive projects further reducing the demand for labour.

This structure of investment is directly helped by the system of import control combined with an overvalued currency. This cheapening of imported goods relative to domestic labour introduced an additional bias in favour of capital intensity.

We thus have a dualistic labour market with the minority of the labour force equipped with capital intensive, high productivity tools. With the rest of the labour force working, if they get jobs, with almost nothing. The other policies of most governments go towards strengthening this dualism, for instance, the distribution of fertilisers seeds credit, electric power etc. is almost inevitably biased in favour of the larger, richer farmer in rural areas.

All these forces - the unequal distribution of assets, the concentration of economic surplus in a few hands, the behaviour of the market mechanism - together constitute a socioeconomic context in which powerful forces tend to perpetuate and even accentuate low standards of living of a significant proportion of the rural population. Three of these forces must be kept in mind:

- a. The volume of private investment is low in proportion to the economic surplus appropriated by those who control national wealth. Further most of this investment goes into highly capital intensive projects with a bias towards urban projects.

- b. The process of technical innovation has frequently a labour saving bias in the activities in which most of the investment takes place.
- c. The demographic forces tend to further accentuate this situation and increase the tendency for the standard of living of some groups to fall.

However, rapid population growth is certainly not the only cause of the increasing poverty of some sections of the rural population in Asia. Equally important causes seem to be the unequal ownership of land and other productive assets, allocative mechanisms which discriminate in favour of the owners of wealth, and a pattern of investment and technical change which is biased against labour.

Consequently the rate of absorption of labour in urban and rural non-farm activities is relatively small, putting thereby additional pressure on the already overburdened farm sector. This leads to a sharp tendency towards diminishing returns and falling labour productivity in turn causing greater hardship to all those who depend upon wage income.

Unemployment

A view was once commonly held that a major symptom of poverty is unemployment. Most evidence however shows that there is relatively little open unemployment in rural areas. Growing poverty is not necessarily associated with growing unemployment.

In broad terms unemployment is first, an urban phenomena and second, a phenomena of the middle class. The very poor cannot afford to be unemployed and manage to find some jobs by entering the informal sector.

Thus most of the poor are not unemployed and many of the unemployed are not poor.

Some Basic Issues

1. Increasingly, it has come to be accepted that income per head is an inadequate measure of well being and that poverty is not an absolute concept that can be delineated by a poverty line. The well being of a person is relative and is intimately related to the standard of living of ones neighbours. The idea that some things are absolute necessities, or that poverty is inversely related to income must be abandoned. Poverty can be eradicated only when the needs for education, social mobility, participation, human working condition etc. are satisfied.
2. It is often claimed that inequality is necessary in order to provide incentives to the labour force to increase its skills (and hence income) through training and education and to induce an efficient allocation of resources. However, when one examines the evidence, it appears that the inequality of earnings is one of the mechanisms perpetuating low income among the poor rather than a device for its alleviation.
3. Similarly, the fact that inequality is necessary to promote savings and investment needs to be questioned. All evidence suggests that the link between prevailing conditions of inequality and household, corporate, or public savings is weak. It is contended that there is no valid argument for inequality- in fact there are powerful arguments against it.

Equality and Prosperity

In most rural areas of the Third World poverty is intimately related to the degree of land concentration. A reduction in the inequality of land ownership through a redistribution of landed property in favour of landless workers, tenants and small farmers would contribute directly to the alleviation of the most acute forms of poverty. Moreover, a redistribution of land through a creation of small holdings is likely to reduce poverty indirectly by increasing production and total income.

This is because there is an inverse relationship between farm size and productivity, with smaller farmers using their land and labour far more intensively than larger farmers. Consequently value added per hectare continues to be less on the larger farms than on the small, even in areas where the Green Revolution technology has become popular. This arises out of the necessity of the smaller peasantry to cultivate their land more intensively for survival.

Thus a policy of land reforms is likely to result in an increase in total production and definitely in the incomes of the rural poor. It has other major dynamic side effects - specially in reducing the power of the rural rich and consequently their ability to tinker with the allocative mechanisms (market or State) in their favour.

Therefore, any talk of rural development, must first begin with a systematic attempt at the redistribution of land and related inputs. Only then can we move towards a strategy that will lead to increased prosperity and equality for the large masses of the rural population.



7 | A Quarter Century of (Anti) Rural Development

n. mehta

w. haque

p. wignaraja

a. rahman

The Model

Asia is predominantly a rural society. And yet, a quarter century ago, when the Asian countries emerged as politically independent nations from centuries of colonial rule, they adopted a development model which was indifferent if not inimical to rural development. Support for this model, which essentially permitted continuation of existing international economic relationships, came from two external sources—the developed countries of the West and the developed centrally planned countries.

The model chosen had in principle three major components:

1. Central planning, control and coordination of the economy as a top-down process.
2. Industrialization and expansion of the modern sector as a means of rapid economic growth and 'take-off'.
3. Assistance from developed countries to bridge the savings or foreign exchange gap, whichever was dominant, and transfer of international technology.

It was assumed that the benefits of development of the modern sector would trickle-down and as the economy moved towards take-off, the rural sector would be carried on the back of the urban industrial sector. Meanwhile, the approach required of the tradition-bound peasantry was only marginal modernization and the provision of food and raw materials for the modern sector. Occasional voices calling for self-reliant national development based on self-sufficient village economy were dismissed as backward and utopian. The growing urban elite forged dependent links with the outside world and alienated themselves from the great bulk of the population who continued to live in the rural areas. The strategy also included some welfare measure, but mainly for the urban masses.

In practice, the model failed for two basic reasons:

1. External aid, both in terms of resources and of adequate transfer of technology, failed to materialize at the necessary rate; instead the 'gap' kept on widening, leading to increasing dependence on foreign sources and the inevitable loss of autonomy. Repayment of past debts alone threatened to choke off future development. What was given as aid was withdrawn through adverse terms of trade. Multinational corporations, which were the main conduits for the transfer of technology, extracted an exorbitant price for their know-how and machines while obstructing the means of repayment by restrictive export clauses. The

highly capital-intensive, import-substituting technology which was implanted had little relation to real factor endowment, particularly availability of labour.

2. Internal resources for development had to come mainly from rural areas where, having alienated and exploited the peasants, the possibility of transferring surplus labour into realized savings was greatly diminished. Moreover, the regimes were unable to use coercive methods of capital accumulation, which, countries with stronger administrative systems and commitment, have successfully employed even while agricultural production has stagnated.

The model not only failed on its own terms, but also caused fundamental damage to the possibility of these nations mobilizing their own resources and shaping their own destinies. By borrowing foreign technology, the growth of appropriate local technology was smothered; as a result, the developing nations neglected to foster their own research capabilities and innovativeness, perpetuating a dependent relationship. The top-down method of centralized planning succeeded in alienating the people while failing to construct an administrative machinery capable of implementing programmes.

The choice between dependence and greater self-reliance had to be faced. Given the character of the regimes, the soft option of external assistance remained the preference and the combination of moderate internal savings and limited foreign aid produced some growth. The very character of development, however, ensured a grossly unequal distribution of the benefits and the disparity grew enormously. Even in the rural areas, when profitable technology finally arrived in the 'sixties, the primary beneficiaries were the richer farmers who had pre-emptive access to the inputs and the necessary credit. The 'Green Revolution', introduced into an existing iniquitous rural social structure, further exacerbated the problems of inequality. While overall production showed an increase in some areas, the polarization in the rural society grew even more.

The magnitude of the problem has finally become too large to be ignored-both internally and internationally. To quote from two recent publications:

"It is now clear that more than a decade of rapid growth in under-developed countries has been of little or no benefit to perhaps a third of their population. Although the average per capita income of the Third World has increased by 50 percent since 1960, this growth has been very unequally distributed among countries, regions within countries and socio-economic groups."

"The crisis of development lies in the poverty of the mass of the Third World, as well as that of others, whose needs, even the most basic-food, habitat, health, education-are not met; it lies, in a large part of the world, in the alienation, whether in misery or in affluence, of the masses, deprived of the means to understand and master their social and political environment"

The Disenchantment

It took two decades to build the optimistic vision of a steadily developing world community depicted in the report 'Partners in Development'; it has taken barely five years for the disenchantment with the process to grow to universal proportions. It is no longer possible to defend either the past strategy of development or its all too visible results. Literature is overburdened with post-mortem critiques of development history which are unanimous on the appalling results and

generally candid on the causes of the failure. We do not propose to review this extensive literature, whose basic thesis of the continued exploitation of the 'peripheral' areas by the 'metropolitan' core, both internally and externally, is now scarcely disputed.

On remedies, however, there is little agreement, due mainly to fundamental differences in the definition and objectives of 'development'. Three different strategies or approaches to development have been identified, 'technocratic', 'reformist' and 'radical'-which differ in objectives, in ideology used to mobilize support and in the way the benefits of the economic system and growth process are distributed.

The technocratic approach, with its emphasis on technological modernization, managerial efficiency and growth in GNP, held the centre of the stage for over two decades but is now in disrepute. The debate is seen to be between the reformists, who believe that the system can still be made to work if equitable distribution is built into a growth model, and those who favour a radical approach, redefining the objectives of development in the direction of rapid social change and redistribution of political power.

The Options

The conventional growth model, with or without its reformist component, may perhaps succeed in achieving material progress for a length of time in some Asian countries where conditions seem favourable. These 'non-classical' conditions include massive inflow of foreign resources, a favourable resource man ratio and a viable partnership between the national and international bourgeoisie. But such countries (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore) constitute but a small proportion of the population of developing Asia.

For the bulk of Asia, the above constellation of conditions is neither existent nor foreseeable. For the conventional model to succeed, these countries must rely on the 'classical' conditions of capitalist accumulation, such as frugality, innovativeness, access to the home market and the political and military power to create international markets conducive to industrial growth at home. Due to the demonstration effect, the bourgeoisie of Asia have ceased to be frugal. In most countries they have, in addition, taken on a 'comprador' character, meaning among other things that much of their consumption expenditure is of foreign rather than domestic goods. This has created the paradox that the bourgeoisie in these countries by their high consumption expenditure on foreign goods are denying the possibility of the expansion of their own market and future accumulation, and are also contributing to the worsening of the balance of payments. Where restrictions on imports are being imposed (e.g. India) the defrugalization of the bourgeoisie and its directly adverse effects on the possibility of capital accumulation remain. This, coupled with the size of the population in relation to profit-maximizing technology which is ever-growing in capital intensity, makes it questionable whether the system can carry its large population on its back. As for innovativeness and access to foreign markets, the countries are trapped in a global framework which neither makes local innovativeness attractive nor offers opportunities of the colonial type for seizing external markets.

In view of these realities, the conventional growth model hardly offers a viable option today for most of Asia. The compulsions of accumulation itself therefore require that a different strategy be sought.

Historically, the only other known method of accumulation is that of human mobilization for the conversion of surplus labour into means of production. This mobilization implies (a) collectivist relations of production, (b) choice of appropriate technology and (c) self-reliance, which in external relations means economic independence via delinkage from exis-

ing global dominance/dependence relations.

There are several Asian and non-Asian countries which have demonstrated in modern times that a total nationwide human mobilization can achieve rates of accumulation even exceeding those given by the capitalistic method at its best. The superiority of this method for most Asian countries today in terms of accumulation and growth is evident. First, the resource/man ratio makes the socially optimal technique in these terms considerably more labour-intensive than that which would be chosen under the conventional strategy.

This optimum implies massive utilization of surplus labour, which is made possible only under the collectivist relations of production. Secondly, economic independence will bring an end to resource drain through unequal international exchange and to the loss due to distortion of the economy steaming from external economic domination. Both these factors will reinforce each other and together contribute to accumulation and growth at a much higher rate.

The compelling economic case for mobilization as the method for accumulation has been supplemented by the demonstration effect of its socio-political feasibility in an increasing number of countries. The inspiration thus generated is interacting with the emerging internal contradictions in the Asian countries, strengthening thereby the positive forces for social change. This is making accumulation through mobilization historically relevant as a serious alternative in Asia.

Since mobilization as an accumulation strategy requires the adoption of collectivist relations of production, the implications of collectivism merit discussion.

The collective and the development of man:

Historical experience indicates that specific forms of collectivist relations have specific bearings on development in a wider sense.

The ultimate purpose of development must be the development of man—the realization and unfolding of his creative potential. Since this development requires improvement in the material conditions of living so as to fulfil physiological and psychic needs, the role of accumulation in the process of augmentation of production forces via technical progress and expansion of capacity becomes crucial. Without accumulation, man lives in a subsistence or low level of physio-psychic conditions.

In some countries, the capitalistic method of accumulation has succeeded in amassing a vast amount of productive capacity, hence achieving a high level of material life. Nevertheless, not only has a sizeable proportion of the population at the bottom remained in relative deprivation, but also an increasing number of the populace are revealing their alienation from the system—the very source of their affluence.

The collectivist method is not immune to this possibility of degenerating into an alienating system. In the individualistic relations of production, surplus labour has been converted into means of production predominantly owned by a small class of oligopolistic capitalists. The very means of production that the worker has created decide his fate rather than serve him. A similar phenomenon is taking place under certain forms of apparently collectivist relations of production, where means of production are in theory socially owned but are controlled in reality by a ne-elite. Relations of production are collectivist in form but individualistic (capitalistic) in essence. To that extent man is being alienated and he is regressing in the plane of his development.

This danger has been recognised in some collectivist countries, where a struggle in the superstructure is taking place. The outcome of this struggle belongs to the future. But this is the only historically known method of man's struggle against himself in order to develop himself.

They also tell us that we are poor because we are resisting to change. But what kind of changes do they want us to undertake. Tio Bading asks.

Well, may be, I can remember a few examples, he continues.

One time, this lady from the community development office attended barrio meeting. In the course of the meeting she had to answer a call of nature. So she asked Agaton where she could find the toilet.

Now, my friends, don't laugh. This really happened. When Agaton understood her question, he was embarrassed no end because, like many of us, Agaton has no toilet. Rather, he owns a one-hectare toilet!

The group bursts into laughter: Come on, tell us, what happened then? Well, Tio Bading says, a month later when the community development worker returned to Agaton's place, she had a big project for him. With a bit of financial help from her office. Agaton was persuaded to construct a flush-toilet.

But, Tio Bading gains, if you go there now to Agaton's house, you'll find that the toilet is very clean, indeed, for the simple reason that it is used only by visitors.

Agaton, however, is not really dumb, says Tio Bading. In fact, he's rather clever. Do you know what he told me when I visited him last time? You know, Bading, he told me, our problem is not toilets. It is not one of addition. In other words, what will you place in those toilets once you have them? That is our problem, don't you think so?

Why then did you do as told by the CD worker if you did not really appreciate her perception of your problem, I asked Agaton. Don't be silly, he said. I have to humor them from time to time or worse things might happen to me.



The Technological Roots of Indian Poverty

a.k.n. reddy

A Dual Society

Over 25 years of industrialisation since Independence have only accentuated the sharp polarisation of Indian society into haves and have nots, as has been dramatically revealed by figures on the increasingly skewed distribution of incomes and expenditure. The broad pattern is simple. The top ten per cent of India's population accounted in 1967-68, for 24% of the total expenditure, in contrast to the bottom 60% which accounted for 37% of the total expenditure. More glaringly, the annual consumption, viz., Rs.36,400 million, of the 25 million in the top 5% was slightly higher than the Rs.35,000 million spent by 150 millions in the bottom 30%.

Thus the pattern of industrialisation adopted since Independence had led to a dual society: a society of the top 10%, the elite, which included, apart from industrialists, business men and feudal landlords politicians, bureaucrats, civil servants, rich peasants, professionals like scientists and engineers, and the bulk of organised white-collar labour; and a society of the bottom 90% consisting mainly of the rural poor. The elite runs virtually all political parties and therefore largely controls the political decision making machinery, with so called 'politics' having become equivalent to wrangles between sections in this elite. The market economy, the social services and the educational system are all almost wholly dominated by the top 10% leaving the poor, and in particular the bottom 40-50% in abject poverty with regard to essentials, goods, services and knowledge. In addition, the polarisation in a dual society is associated with the evils of rural stagnation and impoverishment, of massive rural employment and underemployment of mass migration to the metropolitan centres and of chronic balance of payments difficulties. Instead of the benefits of industrial growth diffusing to the countryside and reducing income disparities-as was expected, the growth of industries of the type set up thus far has only accentuated the above-mentioned evils of a dual society.

Technology-Cause of Social Disparity

The technological basis of India's predicament lies in the fact that its pattern of industrialisation has been based entirely on the technology of the advanced countries (which for want of better term shall be referred to as "Western" technology) introduced through over 4500 foreign collaboration agreements. Western technology which was designed to meet the resource endowments of the advanced countries and the interests of their ruling groups, is a capital-and-energy intensive technology designed primarily to reduce labour, to supply vast markets and to produce goods for individual consumption. Its prolific development has led to spectacular increase in the degree of automation, in the scale of production and in the sophistication of its luxury goods.

When capital intensive, labour saving western technology is introduced into a country like India in which capital is scarce and manpower is plentiful, the available capital tends to concentrate in large urban plants and shy away even more from the rural economy and the growth of employment becomes increasingly restricted in the capital-intensive metropolitan sector. The result is a sharpening of the contrast in living standards, opportunities and outlook between the urban rich and the rural poor.

Western Technology is the Culprit

It is the western technology, therefore, which has buttressed the polarisation of Indian society into a dual society with a small comparatively rich, acquisitive, conspicuously consuming, politically powerful, city-centred elite drawing its ideas and values from the west, and a large mass of poor people left out of the circle of production and consumption.

Such a development should not cause surprise. For technology is like genetic material, it carries the code of the society in which it was produced and survived, and tries to replicate that society. To the extent that Indian conditions are not uniformly favourable, this replication succeeds only in pockets. Thus the adoption of a western pattern of technology into the Indian context must be viewed as the initiation of a package-deal which includes, on the one hand, metropolitan centres of relative affluence, and on the other hand, rural poverty, mass employment, income disparities and deficits in balance of payments.

It must be stressed that the contents of this package deal will not be significantly altered even if technology imports are replaced by the limitation, adaption and innovation of capital intensive, labour saving and luxury oriented large scale technology. In this sense, the cry for self reliance and the indigenous development of western technology only represents the conflict between the native beneficiaries of such technology and its foreign vendors. Self-reliance of that brand will not transform the lives of the bottom ninety per cent of India's population.

Western Technology is not Neutral; It Sustains the "Elite"

In so far as imported technology sustains and consolidates the Indian elite, one must conclude that technology is not a neutral element in the political and economic scene and that the adoption of Western technology for Indian development has turned out to be a decision which perpetuates the elite and furthers its interests. For, the elite derives a large number of direct and fringe benefits from sustaining a western brand of technology. Thus Indian large-scale industry finds its managers, technical personnel and skilled labour, and above all market for its luxury products, almost exclusively from the top 10% of the country's population. It gets its capital from the top 5% and from the Government (either directly or indirectly from the subsidiary financial institutions). In addition there are also a number of fringe benefits following from industrialisation based on western technology imported through foreign collaborations for example, investments without technological risks, shopping abroad (not only for technology), opportunities for political-cum-bureaucratic power and corrupt practices arising from licensing and foreign exchange regulations, etc.

The Necessity of Alternative Technology

The above description of the impact of western technology constitutes the case for a totally different pattern of technology. The features of this alternative technology must be derived from an alternative strategy of development in which the starting point is the following set of facts:

1. 80% of India's population lives in the villages.
2. 60% of the population has a per capita expenditure of less than one Rupee a day;
3. About 20 millions are unemployed and about 200 millions are underemployed.

Since the average Indian is an unemployed/underemployed poverty stricken villager, the satisfaction of his needs demands a strategy based on:

1. Employment generation in rural areas;
2. A dispersal of mini-production units to the countryside; and the production of inexpensive goods of the mass consumption variety.

Such a strategy of development has important technological implications. In particular the recommended pattern of growth compels and demands that preference must be exercised in the choice of technologies. Some of these preferences which are all designed to emphasize rural development are listed below:

1. A preference for capital-saving and employment generating, rather than capital intensive and labour-saving technologies;
2. A preference for cottage-scale and small scale, rather than large scale technologies;
3. A preference for the technologies of goods and services appropriate for mass consumption, rather than for individual luxuries;
4. A preference for technologies requiring little skill or small modifications in the skills of traditional craftsman like potters weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, tanners, oil millers, midwives and medicine men;
5. Preference for technologies using local materials rather than materials which have to be imported or transported from distant parts of the country;
6. A preference for energy saving, rather than energy intensive technologies;
7. A preference for locally available source of energy such as the sun, wind and bio-gas;
8. A preference in the machine-building and machine tool sector, for the technology of mass-production scaled down dispersable miniaturized factories, rather than the technology of mass producing consumer goods in gigantic city-based enterprises;
9. A preference for technologies which promote symbiotic and mutually reinforcing rather than parasitic and destructive dependence of metropolitan industry upon the rural population;
10. A preference for technologies based on rational sustained use, rather than indiscriminate rapid devastation, of the environment.

One Concrete Example

..... Consider for example, the case of fertiliser which can be produced synthetically from oil or from coal, or organically as stabilised sludge from the anaerobic microbial fermentation of sewage and cattle wastes. Ruling out oil-based fertiliser plants in view of the total inadequacy of crude from indigenous production and of the rapidly escalating price of imported crude, one can compare the production of 230,000 tonnes per annum of nitrogen for in large scale coal-based fertiliser plants of the type being planned in India and in village-scale bio-gas fertiliser plants:

	<u>Western Technology</u>	<u>Alternative Technology</u>
230,000 tons nitrogen per year	large scale coal based fertiliser plant	village scale 5000 cft/ day bio-gas fertiliser plant
No. of plants		26,150
Capital cost	Rs.1,200 million	8.8 tonnes per year per plant Rs.41,000/plant
Foreign exchange	Rs. 600 million	Nil
Employment Energy	1,000 about 0.1 million MGH per year <u>consumption.</u>	130,750 (5 per plant) 6.35 million MGH per year <u>generation</u>

It is obvious from the table that the adoption of the alternative of bio-fertiliser technology instead of western coal-based fertiliser technology will:

1. result in the dispersal of production to 26,150 villages rather than concentrating it in one centre which is either urban or urbanized;
2. save Rs.130 million of precious capital in a capital-poor country;
3. conserve Rs.600 million of foreign exchange in the midst of a balance of payments crisis which is always looming;
4. yield a much higher rate of return on investment;
5. generate 130 times more employment;
6. provide employment to the rural poor rather than the urban elite;
7. generate energy instead of consuming it;
8. produce fertiliser where it is consumed and therefore relieve the burden on the struggling transport system;
9. reduce unnecessary overheads on marketing and advertising;

10. protect the villagers from the private and government apparatus set up to take the fertiliser from the urban factory to the village consumers; and finally,
11. promote village self-reliance.

This example clearly shows in a capsule why the choice of western technology wastes capital and concentrates it in the metropolitan sector, squanders foreign exchange and energy, drastically inhibits rural employment and puts the villages at the mercy of the cities. Such choices repeated several thousand times are responsible for India's present predicament.

The point is that those bio-fertiliser plants must be tailor made for Indian village conditions where skills are scarce and infrastructural facilities such as electricity are often lacking. Western designs cannot be copied slavishly because they incorporate the usual preferences for capital-intensive, automated, skill demanding, synthetics based, large-scale solutions. Thus, bio-gas fertiliser plants dispersed in Indian villages must not include main and auxiliary equipment requiring sophisticated controls and subtle maintenance procedures. Plant fabrication should as far as possible be wholly accomplished with the skills and materials available in a village, so that the crucial activity of maintenance can be achieved without urban engineers. All these factors impose stringent constraints on the design which would therefore require the team work of microbiologists, chemical engineers mechanical engineers and materials scientists.

A necessary precondition of this picture of alternative technologies is that they must be developed on a sound base of fundamental science and basic engineering as is required for western technology. For e.g. the development of low-cost windmills operating from the comparatively lower Indian wind velocity may require many of the same theoretical and experimental techniques of aerodynamics and structure analysis as are required to develop supersonic aeroplane wings. The importance of this view point must be seen in the context of well-meaning advice from foreign experts that India should not invest in basic research. If such advice is acted upon, the result would be highly detrimental to the development of alternative technologies.

9 | Green Revolution in Thanjavur (South India)

lissa berg

lasse berg

"Kilavenmani is a village here in Thanjavur, near the sea. A majority of the inhabitants are casteless farmworkers. They own no land, so they are dependent on the landowners who live in the neighbouring villages. In the part of the village where it happened, fifty families lived—all farmworkers. Thirty-two huts. It happened at night."

We are sitting in one of those drab little brown rooms that fill India's cities. Peeling paint on the walls, rickety wood furniture, a portrait of Tagore on the wall. Tea with buffalo milk, and biscuits is on the table between us. We listen to a man's embittered voice; he speaks slowly, makes long pauses, listens to himself. His name is A.M. Govindarajan and he belongs to an investigation commission appointed to study the Kilavenmani murders.

"The landowners came and burned twenty-eight of the houses to the ground."

They locked up forty-four casteless, mostly women and children, in one hut. They frightened them and drove them into the hut where they locked them in. Then they set fire to the building—a small hut.

"We got there in the morning and saw all the burned bodies. We came at three o'clock in the morning. All the bodies were there, burnt to ashes. The hut was less than three yards square and perhaps one yard high. There lay all the bodies, forty-four bodies. They were destroyed by the fire, unrecognizable, it was not easy to make out people's faces, see whether they were men or women, Everything was burnt away.

"Fourteen were women. They were from twelve to twenty-four years old. There were only three men, all the others were children. Words can't describe the atrocity. One woman named Papama had her one-year-old child clutched in her arms; she was holding the child when she met her death. Mother and child. We couldn't separate the two bodies, they were clutching each other so tightly.

"When we investigated the case we discovered that the owners—three hundred of them—had marched to the village in a group from the surrounding area. They were armed with guns, bird rifles and similar weapons. They attacked the men in the village, who took to flight. When they saw the rifles and heard the shots, the men left their women and children and fled out into the fields. The poor women took shelter in the hut that belonged to the village leader."

"There had been disputes before between the farmworkers and the landowners. The poor had demanded higher wages. There had been fights before and one of the landowners had been killed. Now the landowners wanted revenge and wanted to scare the farmworkers."

"The hut where the women took shelter was an ordinary earth hut with a few bamboo poles that held up the roof. But that wasn't enough to burn up forty-four people. When we cremate our dead we need a lot of fuel. The landowners knew that; they brought flammable fluids with them, kerosene and such. They poured it on the hut."

"No one lives in the village anymore. The buildings are burnt out. It looks like a haunted place. Everything ended so tragically."

Peasant Rebellions

In Thanjavur in recent years increasing numbers of farmworkers and peasant have begun to organize themselves to improve their situation. This is something new. It has never happened to this extent since India became independent in 1947. In several recent cases the organizing drive has taken the form of armed struggles between the landowners and the poor. The antagonisms are sometimes so violent that they are hard to imagine—one example is what happened in Kilavenmani.

We spoke with one of the farm leaders in the area, M. Kathamuthu. He is a small man, dressed in a white kurta that shines as brightly as the generous smile on his black, dried-out face. He tells us that he is casteless, that he began as a peasant and is now a farm leader. Sometimes he is better, sometimes full of ardour.

We asked what were the most important problems of the poor.

The farmworkers' wages. They have increased during recent years, but not as much as the cost of living, so in effect the wages have decreased. The landowners hold onto the crops until there is a shortage of food. Then they can get higher prices for them. But this is only possible for landowners with a lot of land, with surplus acreage.

In other words, the landowner creates a kind of serf, although it is forbidden. He does this by giving a worker a loan of fifty rupees. The farmworker can never pay it back. In this way he becomes bound to the landowner, who can use him when he wants, to perform odd jobs for only half or a third of the normal wage.

The land is very unequally distributed. Approximately one-fourth of the rural population has no land at all; 40 percent are tenants. Of the landowners, the majority have such small plots that they don't suffice to support their families. The land reforms haven't been effective, there are too many loopholes in the laws.

Then there is the housing problem for farmworkers. They live in their houses at the landowners' whim. They don't own their own homes or the land they stand on. The landowners can evict them whenever they wish.

-Are the poor helped by the package program?

-The package program helps primarily the upper class of the community; its main goal is to improve production, not to improve the social system. Loans are made, but who gets the loans? Only the large landowners. All this is increasing.

The landowners are now trying to get back as much land as possible. Farming has become profitable. After a dry year it is often difficult for the tenants to pay rent; the landowners use this as an excuse to take back the land. The number of families without land is increasing quickly, there are so many ways for the rich to confiscate the land.

The landowners use their economic power to bring in farmworkers from other parts of the country when their own workers want higher wages. It has gotten restless here. Look at Kilavenmani, for example.

Here in Thanjavur, the temple also owns a lot of land. It is difficult to find any exact figures since even the government hesitates to examine temple landholdings. One organization here has seventy thousand acres, although some of it is outside of this district. The religious organizations usually rent their land to large landholders who in turn sublet to smaller tenants.

-What power do the moneylenders have?

-The government and the cooperatives give only 30 to 40 percent of what is needed. It is the common people who must cast their lot with moneylenders. They usually ask for two sacks of rice as interest on a hundred-rupee loans, which corresponds to fifty rupees in interest for one year. Sooner or later the poor come in debt to the moneylenders, may be during a period of famine, or because of a marriage or something similar.

The rich here have improved their situation. Greater production brings in more money. They can lend out part of the profit at high rates of interest. They can afford to hold back a portion of the crop until prices rise. There are so many ways to earn money if one has money. The landowners also try to pay wages in cash instead of in goods since prices are rising.

-What do they use this money for?

-They don't invest it so much in land; they buy stocks. Some of the richest landowners invest in sugar refineries and convert their whole farm production from rice to cane sugar.

It has also become common to invest in movie theatres.

-Most farmworkers are casteless. Are there caste antagonisms between them and the high castes?

-The caste system is still strong here. The old taboo that a Brahman may not touch a casteless person-an Untouchable-is still followed strictly. The casteless are regarded as unclean. But in a way this is changing. When it comes to political struggles, the poor are now beginning to cross over caste lines.

Without doubt, a radicalization is now taking place. The poor have many common goals and difficulties regardless of caste or religion, and this has begun to bring them together toward a common platform.

What about the farmworkers themselves? What do they think about their own situation and their future?

Bastin, A Farmworker

"I am about forty years old. There are nine people in the family my wife and I support. We live in the same house I was born in, ten miles from here. My wife and I earn the same amount, three and a half rupees a day. One month of the year we get our wages in the form of rice. I own two oxen, but no land. I would like to have two acres, it would be enough."

"The government must take the land and divide it up among the people. We will never get any land directly from the landowners. I am

poorer today than I was ten years ago. We don't have enough food and clothing. It can't go on like this. We must get our own land. My village has thirty huts. Two hundred people live here, all casteless farmworkers. Four or five of us own land. In other part of the village, a mile or two from us, live twenty families belonging to castes. They all have land."

Swamajh, Farmworker

"We get different pay for different jobs. We can get work only during part of the year; the rest of the year, we're jobless. Sometimes we can get work cleaning the irrigation canals and such. Then we get two rupees per day."

"I have a wife, three daughters and a son. The pay I get lasts during the period I have work. Sometimes I can save a little that will last a few extra days, but not more than a week. When I cannot get work, the money doesn't last. If I don't get work, we starve, but in some way we've managed until now. I had a little land before, but I lost it. Besides food I need about one rupee a day for other expenses."

Rational Peasant

It is often said that Indian farmers are so tradition-bound that they are simply not interested in new methods that could increase crop yields (see Kusum Nair's The Indian Villages). The experience of the Thanjavur project demonstrates the opposite. There is certainly a skeptical attitude toward new methods, but this attitude has little to do with tradition or religion. A peasant with a plot of a few acres risks his life if his crop goes bad. In that situation, the farmer does not gamble. If some "expert" comes along who has never worked the land himself and suggests a change in the centuries-old process, it is not so strange for the farmer to demand some evidence. Skepticism all too often proves itself to be well grounded, since many of the improved methods have been devised in quite different circumstances (often in the United States or Russia) and would lower Indian crop yields.

An even more important obstacle to change lies in the institutionalized relationships that often make increased production less profitable for the grower than for the landowner-merchant-moneylender.

10 | The Underdevelopment of the Village in Sri Lanka

tissa balasuriya

The masses of the people of this country have always been exploited. Throughout the centuries and millenia, the vast majority of the people were dominated by the rulers and nobles. This was the position prior to foreign invasions. Colonial domination made the situation worse. After 1815 the British took the lands of the villagers, specially in the up-country areas. In order to set up the plantations, they chased the people who had lived there further and further into the jungles and the dry zone. The lands which would have been the natural areas for the expansion of the peasantry were forcibly taken by the British. The rebellions of 1818 and 1848 are indications of mass discontent of the people. The British ruthlessly suppressed the 1848 insurrection. They burnt entire villages and chased the people still further into the hinterland.

During the British period the policies of the government were not concerned with the peasantry, specially in the hill country and the dry zone. The tanks and irrigation were neglected; paddy cultivation was not considered a priority of public policy. The processes of village self government were weakened. The Gram Sabha was neglected. Rajakariya which provided for the repair and upkeep of tanks and irrigation works were neglected. Imported rice undercut the market for local paddy cultivators. Imported consumer goods tended to kill local enterprise and skill and caused unemployment.

The British built an export-import economy in relation to their own needs and those of the rest of the empire. Thus Sri Lanka was to be their tea garden, and Burma their granary for rice, India their cotton field, and Malaysia their rubber plantation. In the process farming was not encouraged. The status values of society were altered in favour of the planter and civil servant. The clerical worker was given a higher income and social position than the villager. Manual work was regarded as a lower social status than supervisory and clerical work specially in the government services.

The period of foreign rule, specially the British era was marked by a break up of the pattern of socio-economic life and value system of the villages. There were certain advantages in the modernization process and the spread of literacy and scientific attitude to life. But rural self sufficiency was shattered. There was no organic growth in the economy. Sri Lanka was made a periphery of the colonial empire. The villages were absorbed into the world market system as a distant outpost with no power of its own. Its economy was disrupted and left defenceless. It was subjected to the process of underdevelopment which is the consequence of exploitation. The villages were still further subordinated to the interests of the urban areas, specially Colombo, which was the local trading centre in close relationship with the metropolitan centre

in London. The absentee landlords lived around Colombo and in Britain.

The growth of our educational system divorced from the employment patterns, the prominence given to English education, the academic type of knowledge and employment inside city offices further cut the village off from the centres of power, influence and information. The imposition of English as the official language further marginalized the Sinhala and Tamil Villagers who were made to feel socially inferior to their English educated countrymen.

The school system too favoured the cities and the coastal areas where Christians were numerous. The bigger and better schools were in the big cities, specially Colombo, Jaffna, Kandy and Galle. This drew talented youth away from the rural areas.

The roads, railways and hospitals were built primarily to serve their tea and rubber plantations. The tea and rubber estates throughly controlled the villagers who could not even go across their former lands. Thus the hinterland of Uva is largely roadless, as are also the North Central and Eastern Provinces.

With internal self government in 1931 and political independence in 1948 there was a significant change. The extension of free education to the villages gradually brought more social consciousness to the peasantry. With university education a deeper awareness spread to the villages. The colonization schemes in the North Central Province and the vast Gal Oya development scheme helped ease tensions, specially in the thickly populated South Western regions. In these low country areas the large coconut estates manipulated the villagers who had become dependent landless workers on estates and mills.

Successive post-independence governments effected many changes in the rural areas. Along with free education, the free health services and subsidized rice, reforms of a more significant nature were carried out; e.g. the Paddy Lands Act of 1958., the setting up of Multipurpose Cooperatives, and more recently the Land Reforms of 1972 and 1975, the Agricultural Productivity Councils etc. Several government agencies and personnel have penetrated the village - e.g.. Agrarian and Agricultural Extension Department, and Territorial Engineering Services, Local Government Co-operative Development, Land Development, District Land Officers, Forestry, Veterinary Surgeons, Paddy Marketing Board, Banks, Credit Institutions, Divisional Revenue Officers (D.R.Os), Government Agents and now the political authorities. Yet there is no coordination in their work in a given area and its people. This makes for a disjointed effort in the villages. Different ministries, departments, public corporations, politicians, big private companies, local leaders, pull in different directions according to each ones interests and priorities. Even at the level of the Cabinet there is no coordinated plan for the development and liberation of the villages. This multiplicity of agencies without a plan make the rural set up a disjointed picture without a single major thrust.

The government officials tend to favour the more affluent farmers and rural elite; it is these groups that benefit mostly from the many subsidies given by the government to the villages. The poor agricultural workers continue to be badly off in spite of the growth of a new rural elite. The local social hierarchy tend to dominate the poor villages for their own interests.

The villages have profited from the effort at self reliance in food. The cutting off of import of onions, chillies and potatoes has helped the villages to get more income from their land. The high sugar prices have also been a fillip to sugar cane cultivation and the making of jaggery.

In spite of all these, the main underdeveloped areas in the country are the villages. Unemployment is rampant in most villages. In every village there are scores of unemployed persons who remain idle the entire day. While the women stay mostly indoors, the male youth gather in boutiques, culverts, junctions and pass their time. Sometimes the more adventurous among them take to theft and brigandry. The root cause of this is the lack of work and of a means of subsistence, since the employment potential of the villages has not been developed.

Landlessness

Though Sri Lanka is an agricultural country there is an acute land shortage in many regions. The land shortage is particularly felt in the hill country where the plantations were set up and they have an additional population of 1.1 million Tamils of Indian origin. This is because the land cannot give gainful employment to all and there are few opportunities for industrial work in the rural areas. Most industries are in the cities and suburbs particularly in the Western Province. The location of industry is such that 96% of the industrial output is from the Western Province. Central Province, Sabaragamuwa and Uva have altogether only 0.7% of the industrial output (1975 Central Bank Report). The big private companies and government departments tend to monopolize the production of basic consumer goods which are demanded in the villages; e.g. shoes, soaps and cosmetics, cigarettes, fertilizers, drugs, ceramics, soft drinks, stationery and even textiles. There is little scope in the villages for additional employment outside of agriculture and animal husbandry or fishing.

Indebtedness is widespread and chronic. The rates of interest are very high ranging from 20% to 120% or even 300% per year. The villagers live so close to the level of subsistence that any untoward event such as sickness put them into debt. Marriages and even funerals are occasions when the burden of debt increases.

In each village there are a few affluent persons, called 'mudalalis', who are big landowners, transport agents, merchants and money lenders. The poor people are generally bonded to them in many respects. They are helpful to the villagers who in turn become dependent on them. The 'mudalalis' sometimes get the real benefit of the paddy lands without actually owning them, due to the indebtedness of the farmers.

Further the villages subsidize the cities. The main sources of wealth in our country are tea, rubber paddy, coconut, gums, spices, timber, etc. which are produced in the rural areas. Yet over the generations those who work on them in the estates and villages have remained poor, receiving only a little beyond subsistence requirements. The elite in the villages and estates and the urban elite have been the chief beneficiaries of the work of the peasants and plantation workers. Internationally the big companies benefit from their labour, for the prices paid for our exports are not in keeping with their value in the world markets and with the needs of the producers in Sri Lanka.

On the other hand the people in the villages have to pay very high prices for the services of professionals and businessmen in the towns. The managers of business, doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, scientists and other professionals are paid very much more than the farmers who produce the food or the estate labourers who earn the foreign exchange. The terms of trade in the urban-rural relationship is very unfair to the village labourers. This explains the unjust relationships that exist in our society. Thus a bushel of paddy is paid Rs.36 while a shirt may cost Rs.60. The labourer who produces the tea obtains about Rs.1,500 a year while an accountant gets Rs.20,000. The C.R.A. for non-traditional exports is also given to the urban exporter. But does this

benefit the real producer or labourer who is often in the rural areas?

The training of the elite is also generally paid for directly or indirectly by the working masses.

The cities, specially the urban elite, drain a heavy surplus from the rural areas. It was seen how prior to the recent land reforms 3,000 out of 5,300 landowners of over 50 acres lived in the cities. Most company directors and top government officials are in Colombo or bigger cities like Kandy, Jaffna or Galle. The cities are much better provided with electricity, transportation, health educational and other services. The 93,000 private cars are mainly in the city and these account for much of our heavy foreign exchange bill for oil. On the other hand there are only 4,000 public buses for the rest of the 95% of the population.

The city slums and shanty dwellers are very badly off. But those who live in the "residential" areas are better off than many of the working class even in Europe and North America. The city elite are a privileged "first world" in the Third World. Since they take much more than a due proportion of the nations wealth, their situation is parasitic. They consume, often even wastefully, what the villagers and plantation workers produce under very hard conditions. The cities have been established and have grown as extractive centres for taking a surplus from the rural hinterland. Slums and shanties created by the exodus from the villages form 60% of Colombo city.

This is because the transfer of power with political independence has gone to the local elite who determine policies, even though the masses have a say at election time. The major political change brought about by the victory of the S.L.F.P. led by Mr. S.W. R.D. Bandaranaike in 1956 was a significant social landmark in the recent history of Ceylon. Yet the main agents of this change were a combination of monks, teachers and ayurveda physicians - the Veda, Guru, Sangha. This is a group that is one step removed from the workers and peasants, even though at that point their interests coincided. The Veda, Guru Sangha represents a category that teaches and heals others; they are of the leadership level in village society. They do not however bear the brunt of the weight of the exploitative system as the peasants and workers, the "Govi-Kamkaru" class does. Hence their interests were reformist and not for a radical change in the social order. Their immediate goals were of a linguistic, cultural and religious order. They wanted a resurgence of the Sinhala language and of Buddhism. They did not push forward actively towards major socialistic changes. At a certain point their social dynamism came to an end. In a sense they became to some extent participants in power in the social order they helped to generate.

From 1965-1970 the Government was rather right wing and did not push through major social changes. It helped consolidate production while giving much encouragement to local and foreign capital. It eased the religious and racial tensions considerably. From 1970 we had a government that was more keen on fundamental social changes. The youth insurrection of 1971 heightened the pace and widened the scope of change. But this government too is a loose amalgam of groups with both progressive and conservative trends. The upper classes are also strongly represented in it. Hence any changes effected by it have also enshrined the interests of the elite. This has been the general line of all our governments since 1948.

Reforms and Elitism

Most planning in Sri Lanka is by the elite and is substantially for their benefit. Even though the major reforms of the recent decades have been so carried out as to give concessions to the poor, the privileges of the affluent classes are maintained. The privileges of the elite

are generally safeguarded even within the apparently socialistic measures of successive governments. Thus-

- , The nationalization of the schools left room for elitist private and public schools; there is still an advantage for those fluent in English.
- (ii) Free Health services for all are combined with "paying" wards in public hospitals, private clinics and private practice for doctors. Ayurveda is still relatively neglected, as also the preventive side of health services. 60% of medical specialists are in Colombo and 90% of Western medical private practitioners are in urban areas.
- (iii) The nationalization of the bus services has gone hand in hand with a large increase in the number of private cars. Over 50% of the motor cars are in Colombo district.
- (iv) The ceiling on housing provides one house for each member of the family for those who can afford. There is no provision of a house for every family. A few have two or more houses, whereas very many live in slums and shanties.
- (v) The land reform leaves 50 acres for each rich landowning family, and provides compensation for the lands taken over.
- (vi) There has been no restriction on the ownership of shares in industry or of industrial and commercial combines, some of which are mini economic empires.
- (vii) Everybody is equal before the law; but not before the lawyer, who appears for a consideration. The process of litigation is expensive and long drawn. The legal system defends the rights of possessors but not of those deprived of incomes, work or house.
- (viii) While foreign estates have been nationalized, foreign investment is invited in industry and tourism. "Joint ventures" are encouraged.
- (ix) Measures of austerity affect the poor very harshly, but do not restrict luxury items such as petrol for cars, for any amount or type of travel.
- (x) In every respect the well-to-do urban and rural families still have the principal advantage in our country, and that is at the expense of the poor masses.

The economic structure has not yet changed in favour of the masses of the people though several partial changes and palliatives have been preferred to them. The decentralization of the budget, the development of Janata Committees and the appointment of political authorities for districts still leave effective power in the hands of the Central Governmental authorities and local politicians.

At present decision-making and planning are concentrated in Colombo and the urban centres. Hence the priorities of planning primarily benefit the elite that exercises power. The social and cultural facilities too are concentrated in the cities. The industrial ventures and new investments, specially by foreign companies are generally located in cities or within the urban fringe. Hence the rural areas are depleted of employment opportunities. The villages and plantations are largely the market for urban industries.

The present relationship between the city and village is similar to that of the "developed" metropolises and the peripheral countries of the Third World. It was this relationship in economy, politics, power, culture and information that was strongly objected to at the recent Non-Aligned Conference in Colombo. Just as the poor and former colonial countries want a New International Economic Order to redress this situation and be self reliant in their development, there must be a similar change in the relationship of the rural and urban areas.



Peasants are like the Roots of a tree

The small, weak, oppressed peasants also know their potential strength and their importance in the society. They know that without the food they produce the nation cannot exist. In the "Peasant Theology" this is what one of the peasants says about peasants.

"We could also compare the nation to a tree, Mang Igui says. A tree has many parts. What some people immediately see are the more conspicuous parts, like verdant leaves, strong branches, a big trunk, beautiful flowers, and delicious-looking fruits. These parts are like the more conspicuous parts of our society: politicians, churchmen, doctors, professionals. But are they the more important parts?

In the case of a tree, the most important parts are inconspicuous or even hidden. They are buried in the soil, close to the mud, the dirtiest parts, hardly noticeable nor immediately given importance. These are none other than the roots.

Should a person cut up the tree-cut off the branches, the leaves, the beautiful flowers and the fruits, other branches, other leaves, other flowers and fruits will again sprout and grow.

But if one should dig up and cut up the roots of the tree, the whole tree will die. The peasants are like the roots. They are the roots of the nation. If we want a strong nation, we must let the farmers become strong".

When Peasants Speak Out



11 South Indian Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka

nawaz dawood

The 'abolition' of the Slave Trade by the British Parliament in 1833 and the consequent disruption caused by the emancipation of the slaves resulted in a search for new workers for the old Caribbean and American plantations and also for new plantation land in Asia. Indian and Chinese 'indentured labour' was the answer, and thereafter thousands of Indians and Chinese were transported to plantations in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, West Indies, Mauritius, Fiji, the Comoro Islands, Reunion and Guyana. The term 'indentured labour' was nothing more than a euphemism for slavery. The treatment received by the indentured workers was no different to that received by the old slaves. There was no 'contract' between the Indian and Ceylon Governments regarding recruitment and conditions, as in the case of the 'indentured labourers', who were sent to Malaysia and the West Indies. The worker came from India to Sri Lanka for short periods initially. The short distance between home and the plantation enabled the Indian workers to return at the end of the season, unlike in the West Indian case. When the migrants settled down, the resulting cultural and ethnic tensions in the host environment were manipulated to suit the interests of the colonizer and continue to bedevil nationalist politics in the post-colonial era.

The abolition of *rajakariya* labour in 1833 did not result in an exodus of *Kendyans* from their villages to work on the surrounding plantations. Similarly, the Service Tenures Ordinance No.4 of 1870 which enabled the commutation of services performed by the tenants of Viharagam, Devalagam and Nindagam (mainly temple lands), to a money payment, did not result in an increase of the labour supply to the plantations. The planters were now left with no alternative and had to look for new supply of labour.

As early as 1828, Governor Barnes had imported 140 workers from India at a salary of 15 shillings per month. The conditions on the estates were so bad that they all deserted. At about this time, the planters claimed that the Sri Lanka workers were not as industrious as their Indian counterparts. Strangely, the British Administration in India kept complaining that the Indians were equally lazy in India. We can only conclude that the mere process of crossing the Palk Straits to Lanka transformed these 'lazy' South Indian peasants into industrious workers; the magical properties of this stretch of water that separates Sri Lanka from India, have yet to be unravelled.

During the early coffee period most of the workers came on a seasonal basis, though about 20,000 settled in Sri Lanka during the period 1843-49. It was only after the tea estates were established that the real settlements began. The tea estates unlike coffee required a permanent labour force and after the Madras famine of 1865 living conditions in South India had considerably worsened. Both these factors were

reflected in 1876 and 1877 migration figures, when the number of workers settling down each year was over 70,000. The British were the Colonial rulers of both India and Sri Lanka and their policies in both countries led to the dispossession and pauperisation of peasantry in both countries. Some of the dispossessed South Indian peasants became wage slaves in Sri Lanka.

Kangany System

To ensure a permanent supply of labour, workers were hired by the planters through labour contractors from India, known as Kanganies (labour supervisors). The Kanganies were given advance payments by the planters and were sent to India to round up poor peasants. The Kanganies tempted the potential employees with stories about the fortunes to be found under the tea bushes in Sri Lanka. True enough fortunes were made under the tea bushes, not by the plantation workers however, but because of them.

In the process of migration, the hierarchial structure of the South Indian village was also imported to the plantation. The Kangany became the patria potestas. The worker on arrival was already indebted to the Kangany having borrowed money from him to settle his village debts and also money for the outward journey. His indebtedness increased due to borrowing from the Kangany for social expenses like weddings and religious ceremonies on the plantations. He was eternally in debt to the Kangany. The plantation management also encouraged these debt transactions. The planter paid the Kangany on behalf of the labourers and after the Kangany deducted what was owed to him, he gave the little that was left to the worker. Similarly, a gang of workers was customarily jointly responsible for debts owed to the Kangany, so that if one died the others paid his share. The Kangany made sure of his money. In 1917, a planter's survey showed that the worker's average debt was Rs.70 and on some estates was as high as Rs.200 at a time when the highest wages amounted to Rs. 10 a month.

A new employer would not take on a worker without a thundu (chit) from the previous employer stating that he was free of debt. In this way the worker was tied by usurious bonds also to the land through the Kangany. The thundu system was abolished in 1921, but the principle behind the system is practised even now.

Death March

For the incoming plantation worker the trip from India to the hill country plantation took a heavy toll. The sea crossing at Talaimannar, the living conditions at the Arippu camp, the trek, first through the arid north east and then into the wet zone were risky enough; Malaria claimed many victims and so did the hazards of walking through the jungles.

Some migrants carried the cholera germs with them and resulted in affliction of other trekking workers and also in the surrounding villages. It has been estimated that in the early coffee period, twenty five percent of the immigrants died as a result of these conditions; however one writer has claimed that this is an exaggeration.

According to the Emigration Proceedings of 1871-72, W.C. Twynam, a British official described the conditions thus:

"The miserable gangs of coolies of 1845, with one or two women to fifty or a hundred men, strangers in a strange land, ill-fed, ill-clothed, eating any garbage they came across....travelling over jungle paths, sometimes with scarcely a drop of water to be found anywhere near them for miles, and at other times knee-deep, the greater part of the way in water, with the country all

round a swamp, working on estates just reclaimed from jungle, or on jungles about to be converted into estates, badly housed and little understood by their employers."

The rate of desertion was high and even as late as 1913, when there were well settled worker populations on the estates there were 3,500 prosecutions for bolting, neglect and insolence on the plantations.

The relationship between the employer and the employee on the Sri Lanka plantations has been described by a British writer as the planter having to "act towards them in the mixed capacity of commanding officer, labour manager, business adviser, peacemaker and Dutch uncle!" Despite this galaxy of virtues said to be possessed by the usually unlettered planter, the plantation worker saved nothing, whilst many of the 'Dutch uncles' comfortably settled down after retirement in some corner of England on the cushion of their 'Ceylon Service'.

Work-Horses

The planters required healthy workers and so they set about providing certain minimum requirements to the workers. The availability of regular employment, food subsidies, maternity benefits and hospital care meant that at a certain point of time, the plantation workers, when compared with the landless peasantry surrounding them, enjoyed a marginally higher standard of living. For instance in 1935, the death rate per 1,000 was 36.6 for the whole population and 26.7 in the plantation and in 1943, 21.4 and 15.6 respectively. Such comparisons between the levels of misery among the peasantry and the estate workers produced chauvinistic electoral slogans in the post-independence era; however, it must be noted that the marginally higher standards of estate workers enjoyed for a short period before 1945 reflects the fact that, to the planter, the estate worker was an investment. Like the African slave in the American plantations, he had to be kept sufficiently above the poverty line to perform the task of the workhorse. Nothing more than the bare minimum was however, made available. The plantation worker was housed in insanitary huts with little or no medical attention. The 'line' rooms in which the workers are housed have hardly changed since the 19th century. These insanitary, crowded hovels, often less than 100 feet square, contain families of five or six persons.

A European publisher, H.W. Cave Woweer, in 1900 felt that "their ideals of comfort are not ours, and they are better pleased to live huddled together upon the mud floors of these tiny hovels than to occupy superior apartments." He clearly was happy with the worker's caveman existence.

Many who were dying in these inhuman conditions were left to die and were buried without inquiry or inquest. But the famine conditions in South India drove them to the Sri Lanka estates and they continued to come. From the peasant all that the planter needed was land and having taken it, he became a dispensable commodity. Many of the dispossessed peasants were left to their own devices on the plantation boundaries and their fate we have described earlier in tragic infant mortality statistics,

The situation of the estate worker however, worsened after the 1940's in the post-independence era, governments have attempted to redress the balance directly between the peasantry and the plantation worker, instead of rooting out the main causes. While the planters neglected the workers after having reaped their profits, elected governments in Sri Lanka began to develop facilities in the peasant areas. In 1969 the death rate on the plantations was 11.9 per thousand and in the rest of the country the rate was 8. The deaths of infants under one year per thousand live

births was 52.7 in 1969 and on the plantations it was 110.4. The maternal mortality rate in 1969 in the plantations was 2.7 per thousand live births and in the rest of the country the rate was 1.5. Such conditions are natural in a situation where plantations spend less than one half of one per cent of their budget on medical wants of their workers.

The unemployment rate among the 15-24 age group is highest on the estates. According to the Socio-Economic Survey 1969-70 94% of this group were unemployed as compared with 83% of the same age group in the rural areas.

The levels of education on the estates are also very low. On the plantation schools instruction is usually for three hours a day, and one teacher has to handle all the four or five grades at the same time.

Surplus Value

The workers on the plantation had been exploited fully to generate surplus value which augmented the fortunes of British capitalism. Labour creates value and labour power was used to create value in excess of what the worker is paid, namely, surplus value. Surplus value is the difference between the value of the product and the value of the elements consumed in the formation of the product. Of the value created by the plantation workers only a portion was returned to them in the form of wages. The remainder, that is the surplus, was appropriated by the capitalist plantation owner as profit.

The plantation worker did not own the instruments of production, nor did he own his dwelling place or even the land on which he worked. After political independence in 1948, the estate worker was also disenfranchised leaving him without even electoral remedies. He was a proletarian, dependent for survival on his labour alone.

On the other hand, because of the limitations on selling his labour outside the plantations, although he was a part of the capitalist production process, the plantation worker's relationship to his employer and the economy detracts from the classic proletarian characteristics.

The plantation worker's production of surplus value also made it possible for Sri Lanka to earn foreign exchange for its food and non-essential imports. In this sense, an entire nation survived on the sweat of this particular section of the working class on the plantations. Those who have raised ultra-nationalist slogans have also conveniently ignored the severe exploitation and the unending squalor of the estate worker. In 1970 the average female estate worker earned Rs.55/- a month and the men averaged Rs.81/- per month. These low average earnings are recorded in years when production is disrupted due to drought or other conditions. In 1977, the daily wage of a male plantation worker was Rs.9.50 and a female worker received about Rs.8/-. There is no basis for this sexual discrimination whatsoever, and it is time that parity of salary is introduced. The plantation worker does not receive a monthly wage and the casual nature of employment makes it possible for the whims of the supervisory staff to affect his right to work. A minimum of 108 days of work for every six months has now been made compulsory, though the demand for a monthly wage has not yet been met. Even the minimum work clause seems to be flouted rather than followed.

Considering the fact that for every six persons in an estate working class family, about three receive employment, one might say the level of misery experienced by the estate worker and his counterpart, the landless peasant, is not dissimilar. It is no surprise that whilst these squabbles on the comparative poverty of the peasants and the estate workers achieved prominence, those who ran the Agency Houses had given themselves super

salaries and super emoluments. One such director received Rs.214,000 in 1970. According to the Agency House Report, in 1970, 54 Directors of Agency Houses received a total of 3.2 million rupees, in such emoluments, averaging Rs.60,000 a year whilst the worker barely made Rs.1200 a year.



12 Aid to Bangladesh: For Better or Worse?

michael scott

Introduction

What follows is an interview with a development worker who has many years of experience in Bangladesh and who works at the grass-roots level in both rural and urban areas of the country. At the insistence of Bangladeshi friends, a fictitious name, Pamela Harrison, is used to protect her. Pamela's work puts her in close and continual contact with everyday people in Bangladesh and gives her first-hand experience well beyond that of air conditioned offices and big city expatriate colonies:

Tape recorded in Bangladesh's capital, Dacca, the conversation explores aid and development issues in wide-ranging and critical fashion without attempting to be exhaustive or definitive. For convenience, the interview is divided into several sections, corresponding to the principal themes of discussion:

1. Food Aid
2. Appropriate and Inappropriate Technology
3. Road Construction
4. Military Aid and Disaster Preparedness
5. Migration from Bangladesh
6. Why Bangladesh?
7. Summing Up

In a sense, there is only one question to be asked: are we in the rich world helping or hindering progress of the poor? The answer is that the first step towards helping the poor is to stop hurting them.

In editing the conversation, I have deleted and condensed to bring major points into sharper relief, and to make for easier reading. A brief foreward is provided to help set the scene, and notes have been added to tie down major points of fact and interpretation. The opinions expressed are entirely personal and do not necessarily represent the views of Oxfam-America or any other institution.

About the size of Wisconsin, Bangladesh occupies a rich and uniform alluvial plain formed by three major rivers. Bangladesh is the fourth largest agricultural society in the world: 90 percent of its 83 million people are rural and 80 percent depend directly upon agriculture as a

livelihood. Only China, India and Indonesia have more peasants. Although Bangladesh has 63 million peasant farmers, at least 40 percent are landless. This stark fact helps explain the elemental paradox of why, in a rich land inhabited largely by farmers, 60 percent of the people are malnourished in good years and many starve in bad years.

For many, Bangladesh is synonymous with poverty. Public images fostered by crisis-oriented interests give us a collective picture of starving children. Statistical indices offer scientific testimony to this poverty. Low per capita income, about \$90. Low life expectancy, about 48 years. Famine induced death of 100,000 people in 1974.

But these images and appalling statistics are only part of the picture. It is less well known that Bangladesh has more cultivable land per person than agriculturally rich Taiwan. Inland fisheries resources are possibly the richest in the world. Natural gas reserves are possibly the largest in Asia. Bangladeshis are very energetic, engaging and attractive people, a far cry from the way they are presented to the West.

There is no doubt that Bangladesh has the human and natural resources to meet its basic needs, and that the technology required for this is there if not readily available. Why then do people starve? The answer lies in social causes, not in technological or resource problems. Those who starve are the poor who do not have access to the country's resources.

What is the scope and content of aid to Bangladesh, and what role does it play? Almost \$1 billion in aid flows into Bangladesh every year; in 1979 aid commitments are projected to reach \$1.6 billion. Bilateral assistance accounts for two-thirds of foreign aid. Most is provided by western nations, with the United States the leading donor. Multilateral aid accounts for 30 percent including assistance from the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Economic Community. Private aid sources, including voluntary agencies, provide 4 percent of aid to Bangladesh. Overall, foreign assistance to Bangladesh accounts for nearly one-half the government's budget, four-fifths of the development budget and almost 10 percent of the gross national product. In other words, aid is a major determinant of development in Bangladesh.

1. Food Aid

Food Aid is Not Intended for Poor People

- M.S. Bangladesh has received massive amounts of food aid from the United States and other countries. How does this aid help rural poor people who are the most severely affected by malnutrition and famine?*
- P.H. Very little food aid finds its way through the ration system out to the countryside. And not very much of it finds its way downwards, although some of the skilled working class may have access to ration cards. It's largely an instrument for generating a lot of revenue

*In a 12 month period in 1977-1978, Bangladesh imported 1.67 million tons of food grains, four-fifths on concessional terms (i.e., purchased), even though food grain production reached a new high--13.1 million tons according to official estimates.

"Some analysts extrapolating from the poor performance of the agricultural sector up to the mid 1970s also project that Bangladesh will be one of the largest importers of food grains in a decade's time just to maintain current pitifully inadequate levels of nutrition. Yet so far there has been no open debate or systematic attempt to analyze the impact of food aid on the Bangladesh economy..." Edward Clay, "Food Aid and Food Policy in Bangladesh" MS. p.1.

and for providing cheap subsidized food to the urban middle class, particularly the army, police, and civil servants. All the food the army eats comes through food aid. Food aid is not intended for poor people. It's designed as a revenue earner and as a means of insuring political stability.

Most government officials down to the lowest levels get ration cards, which means that they can buy certain kinds of food at cheap prices that other people can't get. It also means the government can afford to pay its officials much less than it would otherwise because they're getting cheap food, so it saves money. The kind of ration depends on your government or socio-economic status: some people get more wheat and some get more rice, depending on how high they happen to be in the hierarchy. Rice is more prestigious. And some people get more cooking oil.*

Also the government sells cheap food through the ration system to the rest of the urban middle class. It's quite common for people to get ration cards for their cooks and servants and drivers, so they can economize on their own food bill. And they keep certain prestige items which you can't get much of except through the ration system, and then they give the staple items to the servants. I know most people in urban slums don't get ration cards. For example, in one city I work in nobody gets them, and they are very poor people.

Food Aid Allows the Regime to Spend More on Weapons

M.S. What governs the way food aid is distributed?

P.H. The volume of food aid and the way it's distributed don't seem to have very much to do with the food situation of poor people in Bangladesh. Food aid has more to do with the government's need for revenue. The government gets a very substantial portion of its revenue** from the resale of food aid, and thus frees up a great deal of foreign exchange. This enables it to buy other things from abroad, notably weapons, from the people who in many cases are giving the food aid. So it's a system for using surplus grain--a valueless resource as far as the donor is concerned--giving it a value for the recipient government to use for military purposes. Food aid strengthens the regime's military position by feeding its troops and allowing it to spend the money on weapons. No doubt it's used for other things as well, but that is one of the striking characteristics.***

*According to official figures about one-third of U.S. imported food goes to rural areas through the modified ration system (less food, less frequently), and about two-thirds to urban areas through the regular ration system (more food, more frequently). So-called U.S. Title I food is re-sold by the Bangladesh government at subsidized prices to certain groups of people: 27 percent to the military, police, civil servants and employees of large enterprises; 40 percent to the middle class of the six largest cities; 34 percent to the rural population. Obviously the neediest who are in the rural sector get the least. Bangladesh: Food Policy Review, World Bank, 1977.

**Food grain sales provided about one-fifth of the revenue budget of Bangladesh in fiscal year 1977. Betsy Hartmann and Jim Boyce "Bangladesh: Aid to the Needy?" International Policy Report, May 1978, p.5

***Title 1 of the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, P.L. 480, accounts for 94 percent of American food aid to Bangladesh since 1974. This food is a concessionary loan. In contrast, Title 11 of P.L. 480 is an outright grant of food for disaster relief and humanitarian purposes and accounts for 6 percent of American food aid since 1974. Ibid.

M.S. What foods are brought in?

P.H. Basically it depends on what happens to be in surplus at a given time. For the donor nations it's a dumping ground to get rid of agricultural surpluses. It's mainly wheat, but there's a certain amount of powdered milk and cooking oil.

Large Infusions of Food Depress Prices and Hold Back Production

M.S. What is the impact of food aid on production and on pricing in non-emergency situations, and what does this mean for development?

P.H. Some of the people who have made the strongest arguments against food aid have been inside the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) because they are most concerned with this issue. I know that the previous agricultural officer at the British High Commission was extremely critical on the grounds that very large infusions of food onto the market depress prices and hold back production. There doesn't seem to be much doubt about that. If you want to bring about an increase in production without changing the essential nature of rural society, you can't do it at the same time as maintaining such a cheap food policy--it's not possible. Food aid is basically a creator of stagnation.

The "Food for Work" Program Provides Free Labor to Landowners

P.H. It's also worth saying something about the Food For Work program which is run by the United Nations World Food Program. This is very different from what I've been describing. Food For Work is supposed to be better, because you use food aid to pay landless laborers in the off-season when there isn't much work in the countryside. People build roads and canals and drainage schemes and those kinds of things. It's supposed to benefit them--which it does to a marginal extent.

M.S. How do the food and the work benefit them--or is it just the food?

P.H. I don't think the work benefits them very much unless you think it's spiritually virtuous. The products of their work don't benefit them at all. The people who do the work are landless. They carry out improvements to land, and presumably it benefits the land, but the landless people don't own the land so they don't get any of the benefits. Now, theoretically, if you drain a piece of land, it becomes more productive and there might be a greater demand for labor, but it often doesn't work in practice.*

M.S. If I were a land holder and the Food For Work program decided to improve my land by draining or leveling, do I then get free labor?

P.S. You're absolutely right; that's how it works. That's a very important point which I think is generally missed. The whole country is

*Mr. Garson Vogel, Executive Director of the World Food Program, interprets Food For Work in a different light: "I was recently able to see a prime example of food aid at work in Bangladesh - a disaster-prone country of 85 million people. A four-year food-for-work programme which the Government has been able to undertake since 1975 with the help of 480,000 tons of wheat supplied by the Programme has already resulted in the clearing of nearly 2,000 miles of silted-up canals and the rehabilitation of about 3,000 miles of embankments. At times, more than two million men and women have been employed on this project, which is expected to increase the country's rice yield by 200,000 tons annually." "Overseas Development", U.K. Overseas Development Ministry, September 1978 p.4

run by an alliance among land holders at the village level who control the village situation through a combination of economic, political, and social power. They own quite a lot of land, although not an overwhelming amount. They control the other landowners--the other people owning small amounts of land--because they are the money lenders. Frequently they control marketing operations because they're also the merchants. They may control the bus companies. They control the local political structure through whatever party happens to be dominant. The government represents the urban elite and has to have a very close alliance with these people and must keep their loyalty. It has to have a means of buying them off.

What happens with Food For Work is that Union Councils* controlled by these people organize the distribution for Food For Work. They make plans and these plans are approved by the government office of Rural Development. Food arrives and they carry out their plans. So not only do they get the benefit of improving their land and their friend's land, but also there's tremendous scope for using the power of patronage that it gives them. And also, of course, there's the possibility of diverting some of the resources without doing any work at all, which also happens to a large extent.

"Food for Work" Program is a Way of Defusing Militancy

So food aid is a very important part of lubricating the system and of maintaining this strong relationship between the central government and the local-level powerholders. If the government wasn't able to deliver these kinds of things there would be much less incentive for these people to support it.

It's estimated now that about 40 percent of people in the rural areas are landless laborers. There's a particularly bad time, usually in December and January, when there's no work, and the whole idea of Food For Work is to tide people over that period. However, somebody estimated that if all the Food For Work food was distributed evenly amongst all the landless laborers each person would get about five days of food. It's a very small amount, but it's a very good way of defusing militancy, and you can use it any place it seems appropriate. You can dangle food aid as bait to people and it performs a very useful function.**

There was Enough Food During the 1974 Famine to Save the Lives of Those Who Died

M.S. In conversations with villagers about the 1974 famine, I asked if there was enough food in the village to feed everyone, and to have saved the lives of those who died, and they said of course there was.***

*Union Councils are the lowest level elected bodies, representing a number of villages.

**While only 5 percent of the rural population in Bangladesh could be categorized as extremely poor in 1963-64, the proportion rose to over 40 percent in the 1970s, according to a U.S. study. The cause of this increasing poverty is not a simple Malthusian relationship between food and people. The proportion of landless is increasing at a faster rate than the population is growing. Azizur Rahman Khan, "Poverty and Inequality in Rural Bangladesh," p.147, in Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, International Labor Office, Geneva, 1977.

***While many starved after the 1974 floods, an estimated 4 million tons of rice stacked up for want of buyers because, in the words of National Geographic, "the vast majority...were too poor to buy it." Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity, Houghton Mifflin, 1977, p.19.

P.H. Somebody suggested that the best thing to do in a famine is to fly an aircraft over the famine area and push out large numbers of one Taka bills. The rich people probably couldn't develop a system fast enough to get their hands on all the money, so some of the money would filter down to poor people who need it to buy food. I'm sure there's a catch in there somewhere, but it certainly would be a more effective system than a lot of what is presently being done.*

2. Appropriate and Inappropriate Technology

Aid Institutions, Claiming to Respond to Requests, Actually send Missions to Find Things to Fund

M.S. Overall, foreign assistance to Bangladesh accounts for four-fifths of its development budget and half of its entire financing. Bangladesh is so dependent upon foreign aid that it is even more vulnerable than most underdeveloped countries to the dictates of donor countries and their agencies.**

P.H. The degree of dependence is such that the situation frequently arises where institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, claiming to respond to requests, actually send missions here to find things to fund. They write the project applications and take them to the relevant ministry. If the proposal is not accepted, serious pressure is applied.

There are the most naked economic reasons for this. In some cases it's actually profitable for the country to donate the initial equipment, such as large rice mills or pumps, which have high spare parts requirements and high spare parts costs. Assuming the machinery runs at all, costs are recovered within a short time by supplying spares. The machinery probably won't run for long because of a terrible disease which attacks machinery in developing countries: "LOSP", lack of spare parts.

Aid is a Transfer of Funds to Private Companies in Developed Countries -- Passing Through Bangladesh

P.H. Foreign aid is usually a subsidy from the people of Japan or United States or Germany to the companies in their own countries which make the milling equipment or the pumps. The aid enables the companies to provide very cheap or free equipment to Bangladesh and then make very big profits on the spare parts. It's basically a transfer of funds from taxpayers in the developed countries to private companies in the developed countries, passing through Bangladesh as it were. Bangladesh is almost incidental to the process. It doesn't really matter what happens here. There has to be some kind of rationale for this aid, but it's really a side issue. The people who do this kind of thing fly in for two weeks, have a quick look around, and get enough to write the report and go. All decisions are made elsewhere.

*There are 15 Taka/U.S. Dollar (Dec. 1978).

**Aid accounted for an average of 101 percent of Bangladesh's trade deficit during the five year period 1973-1978. For example, in fiscal year 1977 the value of Bangladesh imports was \$537 million more than its exports. Foreign aid disbursements in this year were greater than this deficit (\$572 million, or 107 percent of the trade deficit). World Bank, Bangladesh, Current Economic Situation and Development Policy Issues, May 1977.

Government and Aid Policies Encourage High Technology

M.S. Rice processing is usually done manually by literally millions of rural women, especially poor women who are the only or major wage earners in poor and landless households. How do aid-supported high technology rice mills affect these people who, because they are the poorest of the poor, are supposed to be direct beneficiaries of aid?*

P.H. It's generally true that an expensive technology introduced into an unequal situation increases inequality. In other words, the poorest people suffer most.

There are several aspects to the push for capital intensive, high technology rice mills which are being aggressively marketed by Japan and Germany. In the present situation in Bangladesh, rice production is highly decentralized and communications are not particularly good. Food processing is done manually by millions of people.

At the moment, almost all drying is done by just laying paddy in the sun--quite a skilled job done by women. This is a tremendous use of solar power for drying, but there is pressure to replace this by mechanical power because it makes it profitable to do centralized milling. The environment which enables high technology to spread in Bangladesh is highly artificial and is created almost entirely by government and aid policy. To make high technology rice mills pay requires a very good transportation system and large-scale storage and drying.

Large Scale Electrification Would Lead to Immediate Unemployment of Women

P.H. In the present situation in Bangladesh, large-scale electrification, which is supported by USAID and the World Bank, would lead to large numbers of high technology mills resulting in immediate unemployment of women. They would become destitute because there is no other alternative. It's not that they're needed for other work in agriculture. They may be in theory, but in practice that work isn't available, so they become destitute.**

Millions of Rural Women Make Their Living Husking Rice

P.H. I wouldn't have thought mechanized milling should be a major concern for Bangladesh because at the moment tens of millions of rural women make their living or supplement their income husking rice--it is part of the fabric of rural society.

* In response to the failure and the criticism of the 'trickle down' approach to aid, the U.S. Congress provided that American aid must directly reach the so-called bottom 40 percent, in other words, the poorest of the poor. Rhetorical excesses to the contrary, aid continues to best serve those who already have political and economic power. Worse yet, its impact upon the poor is not neutral, but often prejudicial.

**Most rural women in Bangladesh average an equally long if not longer work day as rural men. However, the division of agricultural labor between men and women means that men undertake the most visible work, e.g., in the fields, while women take on such activities as converting harvested paddy into edible rice. Despite their basic role in the rural economy, the 1974 census listed only 555,000 women as economically active in the agricultural sector while estimating a population of 28.7 million rural women. Susan Fuller Alamgir, Profile of Bangladeshi Women USAID Mission to Bangladesh, June 1977, p.55.

M.S. Is it utopian to think that women or women's organizations could own and operate intermediate level rice milling machines?

P.H. Well, some agencies are trying for that. They work with a lot of rural women's groups who want to do paddy husking with traditional methods. There are two traditional methods used in most of Bangladesh. One is simply a pestle and mortar system. A piece of wood is banged up and down inside a mortar. The other system is a see-saw device where you press on one end of a piece of wood and the other end goes up and you put some paddy underneath and it comes down and husks the grain.

They are not trying to introduce any outside devices because they've had a lot of problems getting them to work and people are skeptical. At the same time they are trying to organize women's groups, and give them loans so they can buy in larger quantity and increase their production. They're concentrating on the organizational aspect, trying to develop a model for enabling women's groups to take government contracts, control the production themselves and make a profit. Now if they can do that, the groups may be able to progress to a stage where they could jointly own a mechanical rice mill.

If this works on a very small scale, then I think there would be scope for the government to expand it because there are people in the government who are very interested in dealing with this problem of women's unemployment.

M.S. The women's groups that are successfully husking rice are doing so in some ways jointly, but generally production seems to be organized on a household basis.

They are Not Just Trying to Help People Make a Bit More Money

P.H. In most cases agencies are trying to find a place to put a manual rice milling device and work on a cooperative basis. They would much prefer this for a number of reasons. One is that it prepares people for a step up in technology and improves managerial skills. Secondly they've got a very strong bias in favor of collective production in the sense that they're not just trying to help people with loans to make a bit more money. They're trying to develop strong landless and small farmer organizations. They would not encourage household production if they could find some way of jointly processing rice in a central place. It also gives a lot more confidence to the women to work together.

There is a lot of opposition to establishing a joint work place. But if you're going to progress to any further production level it is essential to organize the work on a group basis. I'm pretty skeptical at this stage whether the women could really manage mechanically driven mills because there are a lot of problems.

Women are not Politically Powerful or Physically Powerful

M.S. What problems?

P.H. Well you have to buy quite a lot of spares and diesel fuel. The actual running of the thing wouldn't present much problem. It's a very valuable piece of equipment. I mean it's probably worth more than all of what the women own already.

So there's a very strong tendency for someone to say "Let me run it for you and I'll give you some of the profit." It's a plum. The

women are not politically powerful or physically powerful. A lot of things change hands in Bangladesh not through purchase; somebody just kind of takes it over through pressure or gradual encroachment or blackmail. That happens a lot because the legal structure doesn't go beyond a certain level. Beyond that level, the powerful people are the legal structure themselves. So, if they want something, they can usually get it unless there is somebody more powerful preventing them from doing so.

In an environment where there is pressure from USAID and from people in the government who want to see large scale milling and rural electrification, then I don't think there is any chance of success. If there was a different kind of policy, which was more centered on employment and on using scarce foreign exchange for more important things other than capital intensive rice milling technology, then we might have a chance.

I don't think women should spend the rest of the century husking paddy manually. If the whole economy changed and more labor was being put into agriculture, thus creating a labor shortage, you could then start replacing labor with mechanical devices under the control of people themselves, so they would benefit.

Road Construction

The Argument for Roads is That There's Going to be a Big Increase in Food Production

L.S. Most people think roads are a clear cut benefit for everybody. The attitude seems to be, you can't hurt anybody with a road.

H. Amongst the big agencies, this seems to be a powerful feeling at the moment. It wasn't the case two or three years ago. There's a cycle of trendy development ideas, and road building is one of the upcoming ones.

The argument for roads is that there's going to be a big increase in food production because of the Green Revolution. Food distribution ties in all available transportation used. And since in a subsistence economy only a small percentage of existing production is actually marketed, any increase in food production could mean a hundred percent increase in the marketable surplus, requiring more transportation.*

A recent study done by a British University shows there's actually a tremendous amount and variety of transport being used in rural areas. There are head loads, rickshaws, bullock carts, small boats and so forth. They are very heavily used.

Although Bangladesh is chronically short of food for its own population, it has started a major program to export high-value food items, mostly seafood and vegetables. Three shrimp and frogleg processing and freezing plants are currently in operation and nine more the planned in joint ventures with private companies from Thailand, South Korea and Japan. Last year, Bangladesh exported 1,800 tons of froglegs and more than 2,000 tons of shrimp and prawns. New York Times, April 9, 1979.

There's a Tremendous Merry-go-Round of Food Travelling in Concentric Circles.

P.H. Somebody produces paddy and straight after harvest he has to sell it because he's in debt. So he sells it to an itinerant merchant. The merchant picks up a very small quantity here and there, and takes it to where it's stored. Two or three months later, when the first guy gets very hungry he buys it back again at a much higher price than he sold it. He gets into debt again. And after the next harvest he pays off his debt with some of the next crop. So, there's this tremendous merry-go-round of food traveling in concentric circles all over the country.

If you were able to liberate that transport from this unnecessary moving of food, there would be a tremendous amount of transport which could be used for almost anything. This would involve some increased farm level storage, but not that much because villagers can improvise fairly adequate storage. The reason why villagers are not storing more now is not for lack of space but because they are continually in debt.

There is No Need for Sophisticated Transportation in Bangladesh

There is no need for sophisticated transportation in Bangladesh. Most of the things which are transported do not require speed, or very comfortable or safe transport. They are fairly indestructible staples like jute and paddy. Given the way things are developing, I doubt there's going to be a big increase in production.*

What is being put forth is the building of paved roads as far into the rural areas as possible. But if you go along any of the existing paved roads you see lots of people walking along carrying things. If the bus and truck fares were within their reach, they wouldn't be walking. Villagers walk for miles, and that's the main form of traffic along the paved roads, especially on market days. For this kind of traffic you don't need a paved road. All you need is a foot path.

I can only see paved roads benefiting the larger merchants. These roads enable larger merchant operations to move into previously untapped areas, facilitating the greater circulation of products. In the present situation that means more exploitation. There's no real need for most of these things to move outside the local area anyway. The only major reason I can see for roads is in the hill areas where they are built for military purposes.

4. Military Aid and Disaster Preparedness

The Military Budget has been Increasing Quite Rapidly Since 1975

M.S. I have the impression that there are a large number of people in the military. I went by four or five different military camps on one road; there seem to be a lot of people under arms.

*A USAID sponsored study notes: "Such projects (e.g., the building of a farm to market road) provide income to rural workers for a specified period, but do nothing generally to change the fundamental economic conditions that produce unemployment in the first place. At the same time, such projects tend to provide long-term benefits to landholders who, in this example, use the road to gain access to local markets." F. Thomasson Januzzi and James T. Peach, "Report on the Hierarchy of Interests in Land in Bangladesh, AID, September 1977, p.88.

P.H. The military budget has been increasing quite rapidly since 1975. The total now is about 70 or 80,000 in the army. The police force is quite large. It's hard to imagine who this army is going to fight. I don't think the Bangladesh Army or the Bangladesh Air Force, which must be costing a great deal of money, is going to fight India effectively. I think it's highly unlikely that Bangladesh is going to fight Burma. Those are the only two neighbors. It's hard to imagine who else there is to fight. So one can only conclude that this development is not really for external purposes.*

The Build-Up of Military Forces Increases Dependency

This build-up of conventional military forces, rather than increasing security as one imagines, increases dependency on aid for weapons, training facilities, oil and spare parts. It also involves a tremendous amount of indoctrination of senior personnel through outside training of one kind or another.

An Army of This Kind Could be Seen as a Fifth Column

For example, there is a British military mission which is training all the senior staff officers in the Bangladesh Army. Training includes military subjects and current affairs and questions about democracy and Communism. It provides very good opportunities for these officers to get to know personally the senior Bangladesh army officers. It enables British and presumably American intelligence to have very good information on all these people. This is a great advantage if you want to have any effect on events inside the country. So, in many ways, an Army of this kind is far from being a defense force in the conventional sense. It could be seen more as a fifth column because of its necessary external linkages. We have seen it functioning like that in Chile, for example, and many other countries, and I don't see that the Bangladesh Army is any different. A lot of military aid isn't being spent on what we normally consider military purposes. The Army's now getting pampered treatment. You see lots of Mercedes driving the sons and wives and daughters of senior Army officers doing their shopping.

M.S. What sort of arms is the Bangladesh government receiving?

P.H. The British government has given the police short wave radio sets, one for every rural police station, to improve communications. This is supposed to be for disasters. Now there are a number of points on that. There are rapid disasters like cyclones and tidal waves. Given the state of transportation, it's very difficult to move large amounts of supplies in Bangladesh very quickly. So the idea of having a very efficient communications network so you can immediately move things to the right place is absurd. Anyone who has travelled in the countryside knows this.**

**The defense, justice and police expenditures have increased from 20 to 30 percent of the revenue budget under the present government. Bangladesh: Current Trends and Development Issues, World Bank, December 1978, p.32, quoted in Betsy Hartmann and James K. Boyce, Needless Hunger: Voices From a Bangladesh Village, MS. p.44.

*According to well informed sources the British government is providing \$1.3 million worth of telecommunications equipment to the Bangladesh police.

The Most Common Disasters That Affect Large Numbers of People are Famines

P.H. The most recent and the most common disasters which really affect large numbers of people are famines. Famines arise partly because of natural factors, like drought or flood, but largely because of market manipulation. Anybody who doesn't see a famine coming, at least two or three months before it arrives, must be blind. People don't immediately start to starve. First they eat up all their available food. Usually if the famine is caused by a flood, the flood destroys the standing crop. Then there may be time to re-plant the crop or there may not be, but people don't start to starve until three to four months after the destruction of the crop.*

You don't Need Modern Technology to Deal with Famine

So you don't need a very sophisticated modern technology to deal with famine. What you need are people who are aware that famines may occur; who are aware which social classes and groups may suffer and what measures, like replanting or timely distribution of relief, may alleviate the famine. You need people who have got the capacity and the powers to organize logistics to get the food in the right place at the right time.

This was all done a hundred years ago. The British had a very good system. They had a famine code which was used by a district official to determine when to declare a famine. It clarified those signs which would indicate an impending famine and the powers which the official had--such as commandeering transport, storage, food, or anything else necessary. If that type of code or a somewhat updated system were followed it would work fine.

Telecommunications Equipment is Very Useful for Rounding up Dissidents

I don't see that telecommunications has much of a role in terms of disaster response. On the contrary, it is very useful for rounding up dissidents or militant landless or small farmers or anybody else for that matter.

M.S. According to a recent edition of an English language newspaper, some 10,000 political prisoners were going to be released.

P.H. The government claims to have released large numbers of political prisoners because of the parliamentary elections coming up. The Amnesty International figure was about 10,000 to 15,000 political prisoners; other estimates vary up to 50,000. It's very hard to know how many there really are. Certainly jails are overcrowded. A lot of people in the last two or three years belonging to one or two leftist groups have been bumped off. In some cases people have been shot and severely wounded and not given medical treatment. I personally know three cases like that.

M.S. Not given medical treatment by whom?

*While the last major famine occurred in 1974, hunger is common and nutrition levels are eroding. Some 60 percent of the households are deficient in protein and calorie intake. Over a 14 year period (1962-1976), food consumption has decreased by an average 9 percent. Fish consumption, for example, decreased by 20 percent in this period; other animal food intake by 22 percent. Nutrition Survey of Rural Bangladesh 1975-76, Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, Dacca, 1977, p.130.

P.H. By the government. They were shot through the knee and then imprisoned without medical treatment for prolonged periods. It's completely arbitrary. There was no process of law.

To provide telecommunications equipment to the police in rural areas will really make it very much easier to arrest people. One of the reasons why more people haven't been arrested is because the communications system is relatively poor and the government's reach doesn't extend very far.

Quite a Large Number of Huey Helicopters have Been Bought Because of Food Aid

Quite a large number of Huey helicopters have been bought by the Bangladesh government with foreign exchange they've saved because of food aid. These war ships were stacked up in California because they were made too late for the Vietnam war, so they came here instead. Telecommunications and some kind of mobile paramilitary force are a new development.

In financial terms this kind of military aid is not expensive, but it's the kind of technology with which a western country can make a big impact.

There might well be a need for this type of military aid because landlessness is increasing rapidly and I think rural discontent will increase. For the past three years prices have held fairly stable, but they are beginning to rise again.

5. Migration from Bangladesh

The Government is Frantically Trying to Export Skilled Manpower

M.S. I understand there are 100,000 skilled laborers and professionals from Bangladesh working in the Middle East now. Why is the government exporting the very skills it desperately needs for development?

P.H. The government is frantically trying to export skilled manpower as fast as possible because, through the remittances from these skilled workers, they can earn foreign exchange to start paying off interest on debts. When aid was first given in 1971, there was a seven year interest holiday, which has run out. Now we can expect aid repayments to increase dramatically. I think the donors may well give extensions or in some cases they may even abolish interest, but it doesn't alter the power configuration. Power is the important thing; power in terms of control over the country's foreign and domestic policy, and power over its natural resource, which is gas.

M.S. A large number of highly trained professionals from Bangladesh are working in oil rich Persian Gulf states, like the United Arab Emirates. For example, only 5 of the 125 graduates of Dacca Medical College in 1974 remain in Bangladesh today. This is certainly a tremendous loss of medical doctors.

P.H. I don't know, they certainly don't do very much here. Doctors are highly concentrated in urban areas and in many cases are very greedy. There are some notable exceptions who are doing extremely important work, but they wouldn't go to the Middle East anyway. For example, one Bangladeshi doctor says, "Let all the doctors go to the Middle East. We're better off without them." And he's got a half dozen really committed doctors working with him who are doing something.

But the main loss has been in terms of technicians of all kinds, especially factory technicians: fitters, welders and mechanics. If you go to any major industry you find that most of the manpower has gone to the Middle East.*

**There's a Large Scale Water Project that Should have Ten Civil Engineers :
There are Two Engineers on Site**

P.H. In Chittagong there is a large scale water project that should have ten very experienced civil engineers. Eight of them are going to leave. There are two engineers on site. Work has stopped. People who previously wanted to be in the field because the allowances were better, now want to be in Dacca because they can attract the eye of some higher person who will send them to the Middle East.

M.S. How is labor recruited?

P.H. If the government wasn't involved in recruitment only a few people might go, but they would find it difficult to get their jobs back. If the government wanted to stop it they could stop it tomorrow. It's very frustrating for people who come to do a technical job to find that one after another, the person they were working with goes. It's not outrageous to suggest you might well end up in the not too distant future with all the experienced skilled manpower overseas, and an increasing number of very highly paid foreign consultants doing the jobs that those people should have been doing, but doing them less well because they don't have the knowledge of local conditions.**

Somebody has to pay for all this and it will probably be the people of Bangladesh although it might be the people of the United Kingdom or the United States. It certainly won't be the consultancy companies because they employ the people in the Middle East and in Bangladesh. So they win coming and going.

*The upshot of the exodus of skills needed for development is that Bangladesh is sinking further into poverty and growing more dependent to outside aid.

As the New York Times reports: "It is hard to believe that Bangladesh, with 85 million people, could have a manpower shortage. But it does." The article continues. "The cream of Bangladesh's skilled workers, from carpenters to gardeners, have been leaving in large numbers, faster than new ones can gain experience to replace them. And they leave with government encouragement. Dacca authorities, eager for the foreign exchange earnings that workers send home to the families, have sent more than 80,000 workers, under governmental agreements, to countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Thousands of others have gone on their own."

**According to one Bangladeshi doctor who leads an innovative rural health organization called Gonoshasthaya Kendra, the large numbers of foreign experts has other effects as well.

"Recently in Dacca airport, I met an acquaintance who said to me in the course of our brief discussion that he had counted 72 experts in Dacca on that day alone. 'And yourself', I asked, '73', he admitted. It will be an uphill road, overcoming this favourable bias towards the wisdom of the west. For a long time to come we will continue to credit foreign expertise unquestioningly with any knowledge they may lay claim to." Zafrullah Chowdhury, "Research: A Method of Colonization", Bangladesh Times, 13 and 14 January, 1977.

6. Why Bangladesh ?

Aid is Supposed to Help Poor People But it is Difficult to Reconcile Reality with this Theory

M.S. Why does Bangladesh receive so much attention?

P.H. Since I first came here I began to wonder why all this aid? It seems to be a real paradox. All this aid is supposed to help poor people, but it is difficult to reconcile the reality with this theory. It's absurd. Normally you exploit a country by taking resources out of it. If exploitation is going on, in this case, then it's going on by putting resources into it. So why?*

Bangladesh is in some ways a kind of pivot: it's got one foot in Southeast Asia and another foot in South Asia. If you look towards South Asia, West Bengal is the key industrial state in India and presently has a Communist government although a very restrained one --so restrained that the trade unions and working class are frustrated and consider it only one step better than the Congress Party. West Bengal has a tremendous tradition of militancy, and has shown at certain times signs that it might really become a pivot of the socialist movement in India. Now just across the border you have Bangladesh with its history of a struggle, although a short one, with three army coups in the last three or four years.

So India must be very wary from a West Bengal point of view. In India you have insurgencies in Nagaland, which are similar to those in Chittagong, Mizoram and the whole surrounding mountain areas. Bangladesh is a low lying plain, but just across the border the mountains begin to rise, with many ethnic groups being oppressed by plains people going there.

If you look in the other direction, nobody knows what's happening in Burma. It's not that far from Thailand and from the remaining centers of American influence in Southeast Asia. It's really getting quite close to the front line. Not nearly as unimportant as one might imagine by just looking at it.

Calling it Aid is Just a Way of Justifying the Process

Is any country really unimportant? I mean, is any country so unimportant it can be written off? What is the cost? What does all this food aid cost? What would you do with it otherwise; dump it in the sea or creosote it? You can turn it into political influence and it doesn't cost very much.

And then, what is aid? Other kinds of aid are ways of putting profits, which you take from your own taxpayers, into the pockets of companies. Calling it aid is just a way of justifying the process. If at the same time you can turn that into political influence you're killing three or four birds with one stone.

There are a few inflated expatriate salaries involved in running the whole operation. It's interesting that many of those people

*A survey of seven Asian countries revealed that "only in Bangladesh have average incomes fallen, and the interesting question there is how, despite the decline in the average, the upper income groups were able to improve their living standards... in Bangladesh, where average incomes have fallen, the rich have nevertheless become richer while the incomes of the poor have fallen faster than the average." Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, op.cit, p.15.

become disillusioned with the whole circus after relatively short periods and you have to keep replacing them too. There's a kind of built-in obsolescence of aid employees.

Bangladesh has the Biggest Gas Reserves in Asia

Then we come to the most important reason of all. It is worth putting in a little bit now for what you may get in the future. Bangladesh has got the biggest gas reserves in Asia. In a situation in which the world seems to be running out of energy supplies, there could be tremendous possibilities for building a liquification plant and shipping the whole lot out. Most of the investment will probably be American because that may well be the market.*

There is obviously a big debate going on inside the government whether this should be used for small scale industrial development. Gas could give a tremendous boost to development of light industry. In terms of production of consumer goods for export, Bangladesh could be another South Korea or that part of the economy could form a complementary part of an agrarian economy.

What's Happening is a Money Lender Syndrome on a Large Scale

But whether that will be allowed to happen is very doubtful because what's happening now is kind of a money lender syndrome on a large scale. At the village level, a money lender doesn't want the interest really, he wants the power. Because through having power over somebody he can reap many different benefits. He can gradually take over that person's land or he can use his power to get that person to do certain jobs that he wants done or he can use that person as a source of cheap labor. The interest is so high you can never pay it off.

So it may be worth putting in a bit of free aid or even cheap aid, as a kind of bait to build up to a point that Bangladesh will be so indebted it will not be financially possible to use the gas for any other purpose than exporting it to get hard cash to pay the interest on its debts.

7. Summing Up

Aid is a Financial Transaction: it has Political and Economic Objectives

M.S. How would you sum up our discussion about aid to Bangladesh?

P.H. Aid is an investment in an economic or political sense. For example, there's a British group here doing research into mechanization of agriculture. I asked some of the people working here, "Well, what do you think you'll find when you do the study?" They said, "Except in very special circumstances, we'll find that tractors displace labor". Since the British Overseas Development Ministries is funding this project I assumed they wouldn't be sending anymore tractors. "Well," he said, "This is an election year. You should remember Bangladesh weighs fairly light as against Coventry." That's a Labor constituency; there are a lot of votes and tractors in Coventry. I mean that's the way politics and international finance work, and just because people call it aid doesn't mean anything.

*"The Government of Bangladesh contends it has proven natural gas reserves of 10 trillion cubic feet on shore and believes through exploration will turn up much more, both on and offshore." New York Times, April 9, 1979

Maybe, in certain circumstances, aid is useful to people who get it. Financial arrangements can be beneficial to both parties, but they are not beneficial in situations of unequal power. Aid is a financial transaction and it has political and economic objectives. The way it is at the moment I don't see that humanitarian issues come into it at all. I don't know if they ever will.

The problem here is that the imbalance of power is so great that very few people can see what's happening. There were people after the liberation who proposed a completely different kind of development policy. They proposed a policy called "shared austerity" where the middle class would really have to put up with a lot of belt-tightening; every possible corner would be cut in terms of developing Dacca; very low cost housing would be built; no huge mansions like this one would be allowed; no great plots for building.

Supposedly We Can have Luxury for the Elite as Well as Development We've got the Luxury

You can see the building going on here--it's really fantastic. People buy land at knock-down prices before the new housing area is declared. They get very low interest loans from the government housing corporation to build and they then rent it out at huge profits to foreign aid organizations. And that's the way a lot of the country's resources are being used. There's a construction boom in Dacca. At the moment a group I know is working in this slum with very poor people and can't get any labor to do leveling work on the site because there is so much building going on.

The policy of shared austerity would have been very difficult, but it hasn't happened at all. One of the main reasons is because the alternative has been there. And what has provided the alternative has been massive amounts of aid. It's been a much softer option. Supposedly we can have luxury for the elite as well as development. We've got the luxury, but we don't have any real kind of development. Such a huge amount of money in such a small undeveloped economy really dominates the whole scene. The government is looking much more over its shoulder towards London and New York than towards what happens in Bangladesh. It can control what happens here fairly well, up to a point, but if anybody pulls the plug on food aid then it is finished tomorrow. So it really is a very dependent situation.

It's Important to Try to Limit Aid as much as Possible

If some movement among poor exploited people ever got off the ground, it would be very important to withdraw external support from the elite. But we're in a weak position now because there doesn't seem to be much of an alternative. In 1973 when alternatives were put forth within the Planning Commission people were thinking in a more positive way.

At the moment, I think it's important to try to limit aid as much as possible. I don't think it's feasible to stop it, for two reasons. One is that there are too many vested interests involved. A lot of companies make a lot of money out of this and it creates a lot of employment in Europe, the United States, Japan, and, for all I know, in the United Arab Emirates. As well as foreign vested interests, there are vested interests within Bangladesh. For example, most of the people you see owning houses around here make money in the import-export business which is all tied in with aid. That's the way to make a lot of money fast.

I am Not Sure if Good Aid is Really Feasible at the Moment

The second reason I don't think it's feasible is because most people in the donor countries really believe that aid is helping poor people. I mean it's demagoguery. It's very easy to appeal to them. You put all these photographs of starving kids on the television and say "Isn't it bad. We should continue to give aid." If you suggest to people that it's not helping the poor they get angry. I experienced that when I was home. I talked to people involved in raising money, and in the mildest possible way suggested it might not be so good. They were extremely annoyed.

I think it would be very useful to try and limit the most blatant forms of aid, which are military aid, food aid for the army, and roads in the hill areas. It would also be useful to try and limit the rural electrification program which is going to displace women's labor.

I think this should be a twofold approach. First, not to fall into the trap, saying this is bad aid and what we want is good aid. Because I'm not sure, given the international financial system and the reasons for which decisions are made in western capitals, if good aid is really feasible at the moment. The aid agencies would probably disguise what they wanted to do and dress it up in a nice trendy way; that happens a lot with aid. Things keep changing but it is always the same underneath.

It is important to keep under constant review how western governments are helping the present power structure. That might not necessarily mean an immediate cut off of aid. For example, Chile had become highly dependent on aid and when the Allende government came to power it was devastated by an aid embargo. It's a paradoxical situation. Governments that favor genuine development and therefore want to limit aid, get cut off completely.

It's Really Important to Grasp the Way the Whole System is Operating

M.S. It's been said on several occasions that the people who are trying to help the poor might do better to look at the rich and see how they live.

P.H. I don't think there's any doubt about that. I think we all have a very naive attitude toward the whole thing, in the sense that we look at a very small bit of the picture. It's really essential to have a very deep understanding of how the whole system is functioning because it's not as simple as a photograph of suffering people or a claim that by providing something you help someone to grow more food. It really isn't like that at all.

Bangladeshis live and work in a monetary economy. They live and work in a rural power structure which makes them relate to each other in certain ways and means that some people benefit disproportionately. That structure relates to a national government, which in turn relates directly to other national governments who are much more powerful and who manipulate the situation. I think that it's really very important to try and grasp the nature of the way the whole system is operating because without knowing that, by tinkering with one little bit of it, you may even make things worse than they were before.

3 From Mutual Aid Teams to the Commune The Experience of the Yellow Sand Hills Commune

a.z.m. obaidullah

Background

Huang Tu Kang People's commune is in the southern suburbs of Peking, a little to the West. By car, it takes around 40 minutes to reach. The commune has a population of 34,000, about equally divided between males and females. The working population is 15,000. There are 7,000 households. The cultivated land of the area is 45,000 mu. The economy is diversified. Besides the development of agriculture, forestry and livestock, there are a number of rural industries, such as farm-tool manufacture and repair shops, food-processing plants, brick-manufacturing plants, etc.

The commune has a tractor and lorry pool and 11 centres for small land-tractors and three-wheel trucks. There are also retail stores (as many as 53) selling articles for daily use. Three middle schools and 16 primary schools cater to the educational requirements of 11,000 boys and girls. There is a hospital, 11 clinics and in each village "bare-foot" doctors. For the purpose of management, the commune has under it 11 production brigades and 106 production teams. The average income of an able-bodied commune member working full-time on the land is around 300-320 yuan a year. Moreover, every household has its little private plot. Annual income from a private plot and pigs ranges from 50 to 100 yuan. Earnings in the factories tend to be higher. A worker in the commune's farm tool factory, for example, earns an average wage of 40 yuan a month or 480 yuan a year, matching the average wage of commune cadres (officials).

The Story of Ing. Wei Chen

The name of our commune is Huang Tu Kang. It literally means Yellow Sand Hills. Some people have calculated that before liberation there were 1500 to 2000 sand hills in this area. Some of them were very high. We levelled up most of them, but have preserved some. They are to remind us of the past. In the past the quality of land was very poor-in the south sand dunes: in the north water logging.

There was a saying:

*"In winter and spring there are strong winds and
sand-storms,
In summer there is drought,
In autumn there is heavy rain and frogs singing,
And there are no roads".*

There was also the saying: "Even the frog's urine floods the land."

How it was Before

Before liberation, 60 to 70% of the people were poor and lower-middle peasants who had no land whatsoever, or only marginal land of poor quality. Because they were so poor in land, they were exploited by the landlords and rich peasants who owned the bulk of the land. Even those poor peasants who had some land had to work as hired labourers. The small holding they had could not support their families.

Take my case. I was from childhood a hired labourer. My grandfather, father and I, three generations, had all worked as hired hands. At that time we had 13 members in our family and only 5 mou of land. It was difficult to live without working for landlords or rich peasants. How much did I earn then? Well, I was fourteen years old, and I worked from early morning till late at night, and my income was 300 catties of maize flour, that is 30 yuan, for the whole year. But what was the real value of my labour power? Some 4000 catties of maize flour. This is what I mean by exploitation. How did we live? Well, my family had to crowd into a small hut. If we slept on our backs we could see the stars in the sky; if we turned sideways we could see our neighbours passing by.

What was the root cause of this poverty? Exploitation. The landlords and the rich peasants had the land. We, the poor and lower-middle peasants, had very little. So, they rented out land to us. They would give 7 fen of land and collect rent for 1 mou. Some 50 to 60% of our income went to the landlords as rent. Then there was the high rate of interest. When the crop was young in the field, we needed food. The landlord would give us a loan and after the harvest ask for repayment with more than 50% interest. If we could not pay, the interest would double, and then we had to sell our house or hire ourselves out to redeem the loan. In times of flood or drought, the landlords would hoard up the grain and we had to beg for loans at a very high cost.

Land Reform

We carried out land reform in this locality in September 1949. The broad masses of the poor and lower-middle peasants were fully mobilised. The land had to be returned to its rightful owners- the tillers. Those who had no houses were given houses expropriated from the exploiting class. Yes, furniture too. The landlords and rich peasants were allowed to retain some land, as much as was given to every farmer.

There were four stages in the land reform campaign. First, getting the masses mobilized, and setting up mass-organizations in each village, that is, the poor peasants associations; second, classifying the ranks of classes through local investigation, study and mass-meetings; third, waging struggle through meetings, and reasoning with the landlords and the rich peasants to boost the morale of the poor peasants and deflate the arrogance of the exploiting class till all accounts were settled; and fourth, distributing land according to the number of persons per family or household, taking the village as the unit for distribution.

The Party Committee from Peking sent a work team to our area. In our hsiang, there was one party cadre. He helped us in understanding the party line. Yes, I took an active part. So did other poor peasants, including women.

In the production brigade where I live now, there were more than 373 households. Out of that total there were 30 households of landlords, 10 of rich peasants and 44 of middle peasants. The rest were all of poor and lower-middle peasants. How did we classify households? Well, if a family including children had, on average, 30 mou of land per head, we would classify it as a landlord family. The average for rich peasants

was 16 mou per head; for middle peasants 2 mou per head and for poor and lower-middle peasants 0.6 mou per head. Some of the bigger landlords had as much as 70 mou per head.

The landlord did not take part in physical labour. He lived on exploitation, on the fruits of other's labour. Rich peasants did some physical labour, but they too lived partly by exploiting the labour of hired hands. We reckoned that, if more than 25% of a man's income was based on such exploitation, he was a rich peasant. The middle peasants did not exploit others. Sometimes, during busy seasons, they hired labour on daily basis. But, basically, they worked their land themselves and they had enough land to support their families. The lower-middle and poor peasants also had some land, but not enough to support their families, and hence they had to work as hired labourers. There was also a class of landless labourers who relied solely on hiring out their labour. This is how we classified the classes in the countryside during the period of land reform.

Mutual Aid Teams

My family also got some land, 37½ mou altogether. But now the question was: which road to take and where to go from here. Chairman Mao taught us that we must get organized and follow the path of collectivization. But how? Only a few months after land reform the old phenomenon of poor peasants becoming hired labourers for rich peasants started reappearing. The poor peasants had land, true; but unlike the middle or rich peasants they lacked farm animals and implements. Some of us were short even of labour power. And, so, despite land redistribution, polarization again started taking place. If a natural disaster took place, we poor peasants working individually could not stand up to it.

Small peasantry are like peach blossoms in March. They are beautiful to look at and red in colour. But one hailstorm and they are lost. In the year 1950, some of us poor peasants organized mutual aid teams. This was a natural growth.

What does a mutual aid team mean? Three or five households get together. They help each other with labour and sometimes with farm implements and animals. But land, animals and implements remain private. In mutual aid teams, in those days, an accounting of labour shared was made at the end of every month. For instance, I help you for two days and you help me for three days in a month. At the end of the month you pay me for one day's labour.

The value of such labour was, however, determined by an agreed local standard. Similarly, payment for work done by any member's draught animal was based on an agreed workday system. Thus, in essence, the team worked as a group of individuals, not as one. Naturally, it could not follow a properly laid out production plan. Some members, for instance, would not do weeding because this would increase their labour costs. Nor could the labour power of the team be organized effectively without a collective plan. Everyone tried to rush off to complete work on his own field.

The conflicting claims of collective labour and individual farming constantly posed a contradiction. Nor could the mutual aid team build up a collective reserve fund for buying more farm implements or drought animals. How to solve these contradictions? Chairman Mao had asked us to take the road of collectivization. The party cadres talked to us about cooperatives and we listened. We, eight households of poor peasants, discussed matters among ourselves. We learnt about organizing cooperatives from party cadres of our district. We heard about other cooperatives and we formed our own in late 1952.



Cooperatives

But before I go on with the story of our cooperative, I should tell you about the two different types of cooperatives that were set up in our countryside. The first was elementary, the second advanced. What is the difference? Briefly the difference is this. In an advanced cooperative, land, farm animals, farm implements, carts and wheelbarrows are all pooled, though, of course, the farm animals and implements are paid for by the cooperative. Distribution of income, after deductions for reserve funds, taxes, etc., is calculated on the basis of the labour that each member has put in. In the case of an elementary cooperative, distribution of income is calculated not only according to labour; a dividend is also paid for the land contributed.

Generally, 70 to 80% of the income is distributed according to the amount of labour put in by members; 20 to 30% on the basis of the quantity and quality of the land contributed by them.

Yes, there are complicated problems to be solved. For instance, some land is good and some bad. How to calculate? In some of the elementary cooperatives in our locality it was done like this, for good land 1 mou was calculated as 2 mou; for medium land 1 for 1, while for bad land 2 for 1. Again, before the mutual aid team or teams agreed to form a cooperative, some land may have already been sown. How to account for the crop? There are many such problems.

Our cooperative of eight poor peasant families was from the very beginning an advanced one. All our land was pooled and so were the farm animals. The farm animals were valued and paid for. Yes, each working member had to invest share capital in the cooperative. The share was 150 yuan for a fulltime working member and 75 yuan for a half-time worker. This could be paid by instalments. Part of the investment was made in the form of farm animals delivered to the cooperative. If any member was too poor to make any investment, a loan from the state was arranged and this was treated as investment.

You say, we had no sentimental attachment to private property or land, since we had never had any before. But I think the guiding force behind our collective was the call of Chairman Mao to follow the socialist road. However, when we formed the first cooperative, the middle peasants would not join us. They were welcome. But they wanted to wait and see. They had farm animals and implements and could produce as much by individual and family farming as we had been able to in our mutual aid team. At that time they still did not suffer from labour shortages. Some of the poor and lower-middle peasants, who had not joined the cooperative, were still available for hire. In fact some middle peasants even bought land from poor peasants. We had to demonstrate the superiority of our cooperative before these wavering elements would join.

Yes, we were also jeered at by the rich peasants. They said "if even the brothers in a poor family divide up, how can they succeed"? Or, "They have no funds nor enough farm animals; this is a pauper's cooperative". Or again, in summer we had planted chives in some plots. We did not pay much attention to weeding. The critics said "The weeds are higher than the vegetables; how can they go forward"? When we heard this comment we got together-mobilizing every one, the old people, the women and children-and in one day and a half we weeded out the whole land. Then some of these people, passing by, were surprised. All the weeds had disappeared.

Early Difficulties

But we had our own difficulties and contradictions. It was only three years after liberation. We were not well off. Between harvests

some households were short of food. They went to the managing committee of the cooperative, wanting grain. But the cooperative had no funds. What was to be done? We had a general meeting. We recalled the past. What difficulties we had then. The present difficulties were of a different kind. We compared our present life with our life before liberation. And we realized that our present difficulties were only of a temporary nature. Our ideas and thinking got unified. Meanwhile, the state came to our support. We got some loans for purchasing carts, fertilizer, etc. That help roused greater enthusiasm for production. Members worked harder, and our crops grew better than before.

In the very first year of our cooperative, in 1952, production showed an increase of 45% compared to the previous year. During the days of mutual aid teams, the average output of grain per mou was 150 catties. But in the first year of the cooperative, there was an increase of 50 catties. The income of members showed an even greater increase, about 65%. It seems there is a contradiction. But, actually, the expenditure on production was lower than that of the previous year. Income for distribution was, therefore, bigger. That year members could buy some daily necessities, like cotton-padded jackets and trousers (I had none before liberation), new bedding (i.e. new lining, new cover and new cloth), blankets, thermos flasks, etc.

At this, many of the lower-middle and middle peasants wanted to join the cooperative. In 1953 we admitted another thirty-five households. Again the question came up; who should be taken in? Some said that we should give preference to middle peasants because they had more farm animals and equipment. We had a debate. The theme was whether we should refuse the poor peasants, who had applied for membership and give priority to the middle peasants. We discussed and we realized that the poor and lower-middle peasants were bitter melons grown on the same vine. We must accept them whether they had farm implements or not. We should also consider seriously whom to accept from among the middle peasants. The question was whom to rely on in the countryside. The answer: poor and lower-middle peasants.

There were other problems too, and other struggles. For instance, some households would come and say "Our children want to go to school. Where shall we get the money?" Or, "We need money for a marriage feast", and so on. At that time, the members used to get their income only three times a year, after the summer and autumn harvest, and at the end of the year.

Work Points

Yes, we had instituted the work-point system then. At that time it really meant "a labour production quota" or "a standard work-day system" covering both the quantity and quality of work, each being paid on a piece-work basis. For instance, ploughing 1 mou of land in a day would earn 10 points, hoeing 9 points, weeding 7 points, and so on. This standard was worked out after considering the average work in various fields which can be done by an able-bodied worker in a day. There were some works for which there were fixed points. This was a complicated system. The team leader or a group leader used to assign the work and since every member would like to do the work which would earn more points, it was difficult for the cadres to distribute work. Again, the daily book-keeping and daily assessment meant that the cadres were spending more time on this rather than in production and uniting with the masses. There were occasions of dissent and dissatisfaction among the members. There was also the problem of bullying by the cadres, since only a few cadres took over themselves the management of the masses.

In 1953-54, as I said, such a calculation was made three times a year, and income distributed after deductions for expenditures reserve funds, tax requirements, etc. Now, however, some income is distributed monthly, as an advance, on the basis of past experience. At the end of the year the production team (the basic production group in the commune) makes a final settlement of accounts. The income of the whole year is calculated (minus expenditure on production, and deductions for reserve funds, public welfare and taxes). Total net income is then divided by the accumulated work points, and a final settlement made. For instance, your household is to get 500 yuan. You have already received 300 yuan in monthly advances. At the end of the year you will get 200 yuan.

Sometimes, however, some families may go into deficit, may be because of a sudden death in the family or because of some other loss of manpower. Nowadays, if such deficit becomes chronic for any particular family, we investigate. The production team leader and the brigade committee discuss the issue. If there is any genuinely good reason why the family is unable to defray its expenses, the committee recommends assistance from the public welfare fund. This recommendation is made public, and the broad masses of the village or the production team discuss the question. If they agree, the family concerned gets assistance from the public welfare fund. Sometimes, however, a family may have overdrawn on monthly advances to meet a sudden rise in expenditure: say for a marriage or some other such occasion. In such cases, if there is any deficit at the end of the year, the family can pay back the amount overdrawn next year. But to come back to the problem I mentioned earlier, we held meetings and then agreed that each member was to be given a small portion of land for his own use. (Today, 5% of the total land of the commune is in private plots.) This, we thought would help to support the family's occasional needs, between harvests.

Problem of Consolidation

Alongside our cooperative, another two were set up in the village. You ask, why didn't they join us? Well, a substantial number of the members of these cooperatives were middle peasants. They had more farm animals and implements. Why should they join a cooperative dominated by poor peasants. In one of the two, the chairman was an upper-middle peasant. In fact, before liberation I had worked on his land as a hired labourer. How could he join hands with me? Our class origins and class-stands were different. But since, due to his class origin, he wanted only to line his pockets, he did not pay attention to the management of the cooperative. For instance, in his cooperative income was distributed on a monthly basis. No reserve was kept, no stock for the end of the year, no safeguard against bad weather. Nor was there any political education. The members did not work hard enough for the common good.

Some in his cooperative, who were poor and lower-middle peasants, grew dissatisfied. They said, "Our cooperative is not as good as theirs. We should join them". The upper-middle peasants tried to dissuade them. But they persisted. Their chairman who, we found later, was really a rich peasant, had to agree. But he insisted that he must at least become the vice-chairman of the management committee. Finally, we took him in as a member of the management committee. He was dissatisfied. He started spreading rumours. We would go around telling the members "Am I not a match for Ing. Wei Chen? I am better educated, I can talk better. I have more experience". But the poor and lower-middle peasant remained firm. They said that what he called experience was no more than experience in exploitation and profit making. The leadership of the collective must remain with the poor and lower-middle peasant. Well, by 1954 a majority of the members of the two other cooperatives,

and a few who were outside, expressed their determination to join our cooperative. By the end of 1954 we already had 254 households in our cooperative.

By the winter of 1955 the whole hsiang (the present commune) had realized cooperativization. Simultaneously, however, another contradiction had appeared. This was the contradiction between the economic basis and the productive forces. Small cooperatives of 200 to 300 households were often found to be too small to develop irrigation or drainage canals. Our waterlogged area needed drainage. But often the channel needed would cut across land owned by several cooperatives. Or, again, another scourge in our area was drought. Barely 19% of the land was irrigated, and that mostly by open wells. Several cooperatives needed to pool their machinery, manpower and equipment to take up these works. So, gradually, we joined hands. By 1956 we had formed 4 federations of the cooperatives, or enlarged cooperatives, in this area. No, they were not equal in size. Their size depended on the concentration of population. The biggest one had around 2300 households. The organization was something like this. Under the management committee of the federation were the production centres, some of which corresponded to our present brigades, and under these the basic production and accounting unit, the production teams, more or less equivalent to our present production teams.

The Case for Communes

This transition from small to large cooperative was not easy but, in spite of all the difficulties, the cooperatives thrived. By 1956, as I said earlier, all the cooperatives in our hsiang amalgamated into four tashes or enlarged cooperatives. Yes, you may also call them federations of cooperatives.

But even these units could not tackle the problems posed by road or water-conservation works. Without a network of roads it was impossible effectively to market our produce. Our area is basically a vegetable-growing area, the main task being supplying vegetables to Peking city. We also grow grains—rice, maize, wheat, millet, etc. But without a network of big enough roads, we could use only small carts, each having a capacity of say, 200-300 catties. Again, one of our advanced cooperatives in 1967 wanted to bring in a harvester for wheat-harvesting. But there was no road. Building roads meant having a unified plan for the entire hsiang, as the main artery would cut across all four cooperatives. This was not possible.

Now, of course, we have a network of roads, connecting each of the 100 production teams. Carts, carrying 3000-4000 catties of vegetables daily transport our produce to the city markets. Take the case of drainage channels. We have now dug five major channels to draw out flood water during heavy rains. But we could not dig them earlier, since these too would encroach upon the land of two or more cooperatives. Besides, for such work, we needed to mobilize the manpower of the entire hsiang. This could not be achieved through a unified organization covering the whole area. The same was the case with the irrigation canal, which we have brought in from a subsidiary of Yunting river to the West of the commune.

Not only that. Land had to be developed and transformed, sand hills levelled, and forestation done to create wind-breakers. How could we manage these works? Today, for instance, we have 600 sets of deep wells (on average 40 to 50 meters deep) and electrified pumps irrigating 95% of our land. All this could be achieved only through a unified commune fund, and the mutual exchange of skills and manpower made possible by an overall plan.

Furthermore, the tashes were basically agricultural producers' co-operatives. We set up some small plants for processing grains. But we could not go in for mechanization. A tractor was too expensive for one cooperative to finance on its own. Nor could we set up rural industries to support agriculture. What did that mean? Progress, was hampered; mechanization delayed. Further, without side occupations, we could not give members year-round employment. No, we did not understand the problems then as clearly as I can explain them now.. But we realized the practical difficulties, say of road or irrigation development. We felt the need for some reform in the organisational structure of production in the countryside.

Mao Gives the Lead

In 1958 Chairman Mao investigated rural organizations along the Yang Tse and Yellow rivers. In the summer of that year he visited an enlarged cooperative in Sui Ping country, Hunan Province, where the members had organized their association into a formal structure, combining agriculture with commerce and industry, and production with local government. Chairman Mao approved. He said "People's communes are fine".

This instruction was issued in early August 1958. Our district authorities then called a meeting of the leading cadres of our cooperatives, and also those of the hsiang. They passed on to us the experience of the people's commune of Hunan. Details of this advanced organization were explained to us. Then we, the cadres of the cooperatives and the hsiang, discussed the pros and cons of the matter among ourselves. We held meetings for seven days and compared our situation with the Hunan example, field by field. We discussed the problems of communications, public works, education and health facilities item by item, and we agreed. We then went back to our cooperatives, mobilized the masses and told them of our experience. We had meetings and discussions for more than ten days. Finally, the overwhelming majority of the broad masses supported the setting up of a people's commune.

That was already the last half of August, just the time for the harvesting of maize and the planting of Chinese cabbages. In order to celebrate the setting up of the people's commune, we planted 10,000 mou of land with cabbages. Normally we would have completed the planting by 5 September. But we had decided to hold a mass rally for the formal setting up of our commune on 28th August. So on 25, 26 and 27 August we worked in the fields day and night. Numerous lanterns glowed on the fields at night, and we worked. The whole area took on a festive look. Then on the 28 August, people from all our present eleven brigades came marching in groups to the beats of gongs and drums and assembled in a square. Young people came in their best clothes. Each group prepared its own performance. It was the biggest festival in our memory since liberation.

4 | Exploitation of the Thai Peasantry

andrew turton

The article attempts to provide an overview of current political, economic and social conditions for the mass of the people who live in the Thai countryside. Characterizing the Thai social formation as a whole as "semi-feudal, semi-colonial", the author points out that there are many variations in different parts of the country as changes proceed at unequal rates. Changes in the last twenty years are established, ways in which the Thai peasant is exploited are reviewed and government policy towards the agricultural sector - its attempted reforms and development schemes in the "parliamentary" period from 1973 to 1976 are reviewed. For political and economic reasons governments have attempted to support the emergence of classes of big capitalist farmers and rich peasants creating a landless and landpoor peasantry who form an increasingly large majority of the rural population. Peasant struggles and their organizations to resist this tendency are analysed, as is the situation after the October 1976 coup d'etat.

Historical Background

In 1855, the Bowring treaty with Britain and subsequent treaties with other colonial powers, made a break with the past, forcing Thailand into a world market economy. Thailand's diversified and self-sufficient economy was destroyed as the country provided a market for manufactured goods. Rice monoculture was introduced to satisfy the demand for cheap rice. The majority of producers became independant small holders, many producing for a capitalist market while remaining organized in pre-capitalist relations of production. As a result, booms and slumps, in the world market also affected the peasantry and indebtedness and impoverishment of certain sectors of the peasantry lead to land accumulation and the formation of distinct socio-economic classes within the countryside.

Summary Characteristics of the Agricultural Sector

Over 80% of the population live in rural areas and the overwhelming majority are engaged in rice cultivation, although agriculture now provides a reduced share of GNP value - from 50.1% in 1950 to 32.2% in 1975.

Although total production of rice has increased, this is mainly due to extension of acreage, most often into marginal and unirrigated land, so that rice agriculture remains one of the most unproductive in Asia. The absence of land reform and the availability of credit facilities and modern inputs have produced growing economic disparities and caused increasing indebtedness and landlessness. Capital intensive agriculture was introduced in the early 1960s but even this was disadvantaged by lack of protection which was afforded to industry to develop consumer goods.

During the last 20 years of "modernization" and "development" average gross cash incomes have increased, but the number of those below the poverty line has also increased. By 1968, 40% of all households were reckoned as poor. While urban-rural differentials are increasing, differentials within rural areas are also becoming wider. Capital is concentrated in the hands of a few traders who might also be large land-owners and moneylenders and have an influential voice in local politics. At the other end of the scale, families barely surviving, find traditional means of subsistence more difficult as they need to purchase rice for domestic consumption while dealing with increasing debt repayments.

Peasant militance was found to be very high in areas of great poverty (North-East) or recent increasing impoverishment (Central and North region).

The Land Squeeze

The distribution of land among owners is highly unequitable. According to the Land Development Department, 48% of some 5.5 million agricultural households have less than 15 "rai" (approximate estimate of an arable holding) each, making up only 16% of cultivated land. Approximately half this number own less than 6 "rai" which is likely to indicate regular deficits.

There has been a trend towards landlessness and tenancy, along with one of speculative buying of land after the Sarit government rescinded the 50 "rai" limit on holdings of land. Other causes are indebtedness and fragmentation of holdings as the population increases. Tenant may be dispossessed for demanding their legal rights.

Figures for landless agricultural labour vary from 15% to 36%. Many small holders may also have to seek wage labour.

While tenancy does not necessarily indicate inefficient production, most tenants are disadvantaged in a number of ways. Rents may be as high as two-third of the gross produce, and with the subordination of the tenant to the landlord there is little incentive for improvement. Often the tenant is forced to pre-sell his produce at $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ the market rate. It is striking that the first issue on which farmers began to organize in 1973 was the question of rents.

Ploughing on the Backs of the Farmers"

Agricultural producers are disadvantaged in a number of other ways. There are 5-6 middlemen between consumer and producer, while there is a near monopoly of rice exporters.

80% of farming families are in debt. While official lending rates are 10-14% p.a., unofficially money-lenders and landlords lend at an average rate of 25% going up to 120% in some areas.

The cost of fertiliser and other inputs is high, while agricultural wages are far lower than urban ones. In 1976 - a worker on an agribusiness farm could still be paid 8 "baht" per day.

Government Policies

Rice Prices

In 1955 Government imposed a premium on exported rice. This was to restrict exports and tax the exporters, but in fact the policy has been criticized as a hidden subsidy for the urban sector for which the producers have to pay.

A government policy of guaranteeing prices has also had little effect. Between 1969-72 government was to buy 150,000 tons of rice out of 8 million tons marketed. However, much less than this was bought, in some cases from the mills rather than producers. It was the richer farmers with official connections who benefited.

Government Sponsored Farmers Groups

Co-operatives have existed for some seventy years, but have received a considerable impetus from foreign aid programmes which have provided credit facilities to farmers groups, as well as other inputs. These have worked to benefit the already wealthy farmers or to create a new capitalist class in the countryside.

In some cases, aid programmes such as Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) which is U.S. backed, are specifically part of a counter insurgency programme. ARD lab spent 90% of its budget on road building, for military-political reason.

The 1975 and 1976 Local Development Schemes

These projects, providing off-season employment and decentralising control of rural development, worked in the same way as the sponsored farmer's groups - encouraging capitalist relations, increasing corruption among officials and rich farmers, while providing little work to labourers.

Land Reform and Land Rent Reform

In 1974 and 1975, due to populist pressures the new Kukirt Promoj government passed two Acts. The first, the Agricultural Land Rent Control Act of 1974 strengthened the position of tenants. The basic provisions would have reduced rents from a norm of 50%, sometimes for each harvest, to a maximum of 33 1/3% and would also have provided the tenant with security of possession and a number of other safe-guards. The main activity of the Peasant Federation of Thailand was to publicise this Act and attempt to implement it.

The Agricultural Land Reform Act of 1973 while acting as a political sop to a wide spectrum of peasants was designed to permit and encourage the development on the one hand, of a rich peasant class, and of the other large scale capitalist agri-business. It was never implemented because of loopholes in the Act.

Peasants Organize The Peasants Federation of Thailand

In November 1974, after a series of farmers demonstrations in Bangkok and the provinces, the Peasants Federation of Thailand was formed. One outcome of their demands such as land to the landless, and lessening of interest rates, was the hasty passing of the Land Rent Control Act. The movement which was committed to peaceful methods continued to gain strength in spite of severe opposition. Village and district headmen refused to publicize the Rent Act. Meetings were attacked by the police, military and ultra right wing para-military organizations. In 1974 and 1975, there was a wave of assassinations, which culminated on the killing of Intha Sribunruang, the Vice President of the P.F.T..

However, the P.F.T. had not been unsuccessful in its methods. A pamphlet issued in December 1974, records resistance against 600 cases of "landlord bullying, and 100 cases of refusal to pay rents above the legal maximum. A number of landlords were taken to court in this period.

Peasant Classes

The author analyses the different strata of the peasantry and their potential revolutionary role. He concludes that the 48% of rural households who can be classified as "poor peasants" because they own less than 15 "rai" of land, together with the landless, will be a firm revolutionary force.

The middle peasants are an ambivalent force. Many experience the same hardship and injustice as poor peasants. They are also more likely to be ruined through indebtedness than succeed as petty capitalists.

Rich peasants alone, are supported by the government, but they are numerically small and unlikely to be allowed to increase at the expense of large landowners. There are fundamental differences of interest between the poor and rich peasantry, yet social and cultural ties may at times be of benefit in helping the rich peasant sympathise with the poor peasantry in opposition to officialdom and some urban elements.

Political Parties

In the January 1975 elections to the National Assembly, an alliance of the Socialist Party of Thailand (SPT) which campaigned for the PFT, and the United Socialist Front Party (USF) won 25 seats out of 269. They had campaigned on a rural programme of income redistribution, land reform and state control of key industries. With limited funds and severe harassment, this was no mean achievement.

The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) which established itself in the countryside during the anti-Japanese movement has been waging armed struggle since 1965. In the same year, a Thai Patriotic Front was formed to unite a wider spectrum of revolutionary allies.

By 1969, the Peoples Liberation Army of Thailand was formed. It is currently reckoned to have 10,000 troops and the same number of militia. In many villages, a system of dual power prevails. In 1977, 36 provinces were declared "infiltrated provinces" including almost the whole of the North-East, South and West.

Agrarian Reform or Revolution ?

In conclusion, the author states that although in some cases, conditions described above have changed after the 1976 coup d'etat - for instance the abandoning of the rural development and other reform schemes, fundamental conditions remain the same and in fact have continued to worsen for the Thai peasantry.

After the 1976 coup, with all forms of open activity banned, and a bloody suppression of the workers and peasants movements, thousands of people have "left for the jungle". They can expect support from those who had earlier taken part in more open forms of struggle as well as Thai exiles of a wide spectrum of political beliefs who have taken a firm stand against the dictatorship and see no choice ahead but civil war.

In September 1977 a Committee for Co-ordinating Patriotic and Democratic Forces was set up, which has broadcast over clandestine radio. It includes many well-known personalities among peasant leaders, trade unionists, writers and others. The SPT, USF, NSCT, individuals from the PFT and other groups have joined the United Front under the leadership of the Communist Party and have endorsed the policy of armed struggle.

The military regime appears to have two alternatives - to continue repressive policies or to attempt to buy off rural revolt with limited

agrarian reform. With the failure of the attempts at reform in the 1975-76 parliamentary period it is difficult to see how this would succeed without more fundamental change under steadily deteriorating conditions.

More Thai people would come to see a stark choice between semi-fuedal, semi-colonial rule and a conscious and progressive shift to a socialist society. If the opposition, and crucially the poor peasants and their allies, make this choice then it is hard to see how the conflict could be resolved without armed struggle of a qualitatively new kind and level of intensity. In that case a new situation in the Thai countryside and a new conjuncture in Thai history will have been reached.



15 | The Peasant and the White Man

khamasing srinawk

The village is no more than 20 kilometres to the north of Bangkok. Its houses are strung along a canal each separated from the other by a water-filled ditch and a boundary of small trees. Most of them are low with atap roofs sloping down almost to the raised earth beneath. The sleeping platform and kitchen are waist high and their wooden floors are wide enough to accommodate the family. What space there is in the house is partitioned by flower-patterned cotton hangings. In front of each house is a crudely made bench or upended logs for friends to sit on when they stop by to chat. In the dry season, the treadmill, rake and plough are kept under the raised floor of the sleeping room; the chickens roost there in the rainy season. Close by each house is a haystack and a buffalo shed.

The house, or more precisely, hut of Uncle Khong is not much different from the others. The absence, however, of a haystack and buffalo shed does not mean he is a special class of peasant who does not have to work for the name, only that at his age, no longer having the strength to wrestle with the soil, he superannuated himself.

The life of true peasants like Khong is uncomplicated, predetermined. When the rains come, they plough, then seed, then replant. If the rain is good, there's enough rice left over to sell, and if too much, they buy rice with what condiments, shrimp paste and fish sauce they need on credit and wait to redeem themselves the following year. You can think of it as fate or call it, more flatteringly as the townspeople do, heroism, and you would not be far wrong. Khong preferred to regard himself as heroic because, though he had not even a dot of land of his own, he was still able to provide for his wife and the many animals that depended on him as well as others provided for their families. If he had had children, he was sure he could do as well for them. In this vein, he boasted with Khem, his girl-friend, bride and now old woman.

'If we had kids, I could do right by them, couldn't I, dear?'

'Yes, yes,' she acknowledged, busy feeding all their six dogs. Never failing to give his pride a fillip, she added, 'Even if we had six, they wouldn't eat more than this pack. That Somrit of yours alone eats more than the both of us together.'

Khong glanced at the gangly puppy, legs spread, belly bloated, slurping rice gravy from a coconut shell. Being childless probably explained his fondness for animals. In his prime, he kept the lot, from buffaloes to fighting cocks and fish. But as age advanced and energy declined, realizing he could no longer care for all, he sold them, even his partner in life, the buffalo. This did no great harm, though, for

his work had already changed its character. Formerly, his aim in growing rice was to earn enough to have extra money to spend and to donate at least as much as others to charity. Later he was satisfied if enough grew to feed his family for the year. As his capacity for heavy work ebbed, he took to gathering lotus leaves and stems from the paddy field ditches for sale to market vendors. This gave him enough for each day. Later, as he had an honest and grateful nature, the gentleman owner of the land he lived on was kind enough to ask him to oversee and collect rents from the newcomers. By then, the buffalo was no longer needed. As Khong's eyesight grew poor and his hair turned grey, he could no longer defend his chickens from the wiles of the new generation of children and he gave up trying to look after them. They were given away to whoever asked for them. Six dogs, four cats and a few leftover hens remained.

Khong did not fancy the six equally; some he kept out of pity, but the one he really loved was 'old Somrit', the one his wife referred to. In fact, Somrit was only the spotted bitch's puppy and was born under the hut. His colour was strage, though not mottled like his mother nor dark like his father who Khong guessed was Blackie. Apart from his funny colour, he differed from the other dogs in other ways: his ears stuck out and his eyes were small, like an elephant's.* The old man had thought that when he was a little older he would name him 'Elephant'. But he was called 'Somrit' because of an event one day, three months before. His landlord when leading a group of multi-lingual foreigners in a boat along the canal had stopped at his hut to exchange pleasantries and to give him another job--to show the paddy field land and point out its boundaries to those interested. He willingly accepted. Just before leaving, the landlord noticed Somrit frolicking with a playmate in front of the house and exclaimed, 'What an odd pup! You should call it 'Somrit'--after all it means brassy-gold. That's his colour.' All the visitors agreed. When they left, Khong, feeling he loved the dog twice as much, clucked him over and patted his head, and from then on called him 'Somrit'.

The old man performed his new assignment enthusiastically. During those days, anyone passing down the canal who glanced at the bank would be apt to hear an old man in an old black shirt sitting together with his dog in the shade of a bamboo grove call out, 'Have you come to see my landlord's land?' Some said they had, others tittered and occasionally the old man would laugh at himself for mistakenly addressing one of his own villagers. Those who did want to see the land were shown around with all the alacrity desired by the owner. Hearing new things in his talks with these people and walking side by side with persons he thought were millionaires made him happy. Occasionally, a nice person would give him a cigarette and even offer to light it.

For several days, Khong watched with curiosity a smallish boat punted upstream occupied sometimes by only one passenger, sometimes by several, which, as it approached his perch, would head into the thicket behind his hut. Though he thought they might be people coming to look at the land, to approach them would be inopportune. If they had come to see it, they would inevitably come to him for information. The boat appeared in the afternoon and remained until sunset. Sometimes the old man saw one of its passengers jump onto the bank--a big man in a grey shirt wearing a bell-shaped peasant's hat, looking up and looking down and finally disappearing into a clump of trees. At the beginning of the second week, the man could contain himself no longer and decided to take a look. With a

*This description is one of the stereotypes of a late Premier of Thailand, back from treatment at Walter Reed Hospital in the United States, and in power when this story was written. There are similarities in the dog's name and idiosyncracies such as a passion for cleanliness (trans.).

snap of his fingers, he got Somrit moving and went along by the canal, the dog running ahead. When Somrit barked loudly, Khong quickened his pace and heard the dog being shooed away and then a greeting:

'How are you, Uncle?'

'Hello, eh?' He was surprised when the owner of the voice emerged from the bushes and turned out to be a tall, heavy-set white man, with several large and small cases hanging from his shoulders, his broad smile evoking a grin from Khong.

'What are you doing there, Sir?' he asked when he recovered himself.

Instead of answering, the man pointed to the line of small trees ahead of them but seeing the old man perplexed, added, by way of explanation, 'Birds.'

'Ah, you've come bird-shooting,' whispered Khong spying a pair of bulbuls hopping along a branch. The white man shook his head negatively, his peasant's hat gyrating on his head.

'Not at all,' he replied, peering through his binoculars, 'I came to do research on birds.'

Khong told Somrit to shut up and the foreigner handed the field glasses to Khong so he could take a look.

From then on, Khong so enjoyed going with his new white friend he almost forgot his landlord's assignment. The foreigner's manner was engaging and his outsize body comical. When hunched over, his rump high, he bobbed along among the trees after a bird call, it was not easy for Khong to smother a guffaw, and then, too, his bird-lover would bring him new and tasty snacks of which the soda pop was especially appealing. But the strongest reason for his affinity for the foreigner was the latter's show of affection for his dog Somrit. When his bird watching was over, he would call Somrit over, rub his back and give him a big biscuit. The triple friendship grew daily. The old man of Bang Jark Canal sometimes invited his new friend to visit his hut but there always seemed to be some obstacle.

Late afternoon one day after the passage of almost a week, the white man told him that the birds they had been observing with fascination had laid some eggs and he would be back in five days or so to see them, but in the meantime he would ask Khong to keep the local boys from disturbing them which Khong willingly agreed to. Finally, he asked about Somrit who did not accompany them that day. Khong replied that Somrit was sick from the previous day, having so overstuffed himself with food he couldn't get up. At this, the foreigner opened his eyes wide and questioned, 'What's wrong with him?'

'Overeating. His belly's so full, he can't get on his feet.'

Reflecting for a moment, the white man asked, 'Can I visit him?'

'Please do.'

The foreigner smiled at Khong's eagerness.

Khong guided his important guest along the path beside the narrow waterway to his hut and called out to his wife, 'Khem, Khem dear, the foreigner has come to visit us.'

The old man called again and again but there was no answer except

for the initial howling of the dogs which he stopped with a sharp word. His composure lost, he mumbled apologetically, 'Not in.'

'Who's not in?'

'My wife. Her name is Khem.'

The white man laughed. 'That's all right. I came to visit Somrit.'

'Where's Somrit gone, Khong?'

'It's you, is it, Mr. Yawt?' Khong peered at his friend, the school-teacher, sitting under the canopy of the small boat.

'He was sick so the foreigner took him to the city for treatment. Where are you going in that boat?'

'I'm just getting a ride to school.'

Every morning Khong would sit comfortably at the bank of the canal under the bamboos in front of his house and in the afternoon would walk along the bank turning into the path along the ditch towards the line of small trees where he would busy himself until evening watching the antics of his pair of birds hopping and flying about the trees now festooned with yellow flowers. It became quite pleasant. Sometimes he would try to imitate the bird calls and would catch himself chirping and peeping even after the birds had disappeared into the shrubs. They have just a few words, he reflected, and manage to get on together whereas men have thousands of words but still can't hit it off.

On returning after dark one day, he replied to his wife's inquiry after Somrit, 'Not yet. The foreigner hasn't brought him back yet but the birds are still there singing in the evening.'

Khem would smile and shake her head at Khong's comments which would usually include the white man and the birds.

'What about Somrit? You said the foreigner would bring him back in five or six days.'

'Take it easy. Tomorrow or the day after. How do we know how sick he was? The foreigner said he had to be taken to a doctor. What a lucky dog he is,' Khong said emphatically.

The following day, the foreigner did come but without Somrit. He said that he had sent him to a training school.

Astonished, Khong could only exclaim, 'What? A dog school!'

'That's right,' the foreigner said.

'What in the world do they teach them to be?'

'They teach them to be as clever as people,' the white man continued when he saw Khong appear uneasy.

'They'll teach him to know his duties, to guard the house, carry things for his master, catch thieves, and also to be clean and not to make messes.' The explanation was lengthy.

'Can they do that?'

'Absolutely,' the foreigner asserted.

That evening, the villagers travelling along the canal in front of the hut heard the voice of the old man chatting interrupted by the sound of thin laughter from his wife. Thinking it over, Khong decided he had come upon one of the wonders of the world.

'Listen dear, city dogs can do anything. That's why they're so expensive; they cost even more than a full-grown working buffalo. If it weren't our white gentleman who said so, I wouldn't believe it.'

Finally the day awaited by both husband and wife came but Khong was badly disappointed to see Somrit whining in the boat refusing to get out. When at last they got him onto the bank, he snarled at the old man and struggled to get back into the boat. Embarrassed, the white man threw a biscuit to the dog and pushed off leaving him whimpering on the bank. Khong and Khem exchanged glances.

'Looks like he's forgotten the taste of rice gravy ...,' the woman spoke first.

'It looks that way,' the old man said regretfully looking at the dog biscuit with misgiving.

After he had gulped down his special food, Somrit leaped at one of the hen's, snapping at it around the house and when it finally escaped by flying onto the roof, Somrit turned on one of his old friends who was wagging its tail to welcome him back, seized him by the throat and flung him around. Unable to stand it any more, the old lady seized a paddle and slapped it sharply down in the middle of Somrit's back. Somrit, squealing, slinked off under the house.

'Look at that. You eat a few fancy meals and think you're a big foreigner. I'll break your back with the paddle in a minute,' she threatened the dog again.

'Lay off him, Khem. He's just back from good food and good times over there, let him show off a little. When the smell of the white man wears off, he'll be himself again.'

'Foreigners, bah!' The old lady leaned the paddle against the house post. 'You just watch. He's not yet finished with this foreigner business. Here we were counting the days to his return and when he sees us he growls in our face.'

'Well, if he knew what was right, he'd be a man not a dog,' the old man continued to take the dog's part and his wife walked away petulantly.

The following morning Somrit was no better. He was moping, refused to eat, gave a nasty look at anyone who came near, snarled and growled. At noon, the teacher, Yawt, paddled up to the front of the house and called out, 'Has Somrit come back? I thought I heard him bark.'

'It's awful, Yawt,' the old man complained as he walked out to the landing.

'Since he came back from the city, he's refused to eat rice, behaves so proud and goes after the other dogs.'

'But you said he'd been sent to a training school.'

'Yeah, I don't know what they taught him. He's been ruined.'

The teacher mulled over the problem and advised, 'Maybe he just feels a little strange in these surroundings or he's learned new habits. I hear

at these dog schools they train dogs to love cleanliness, to relieve themselves in the proper places and not to accept food from strangers so as to avoid poisoning.' The teacher expatiated in the manner of people who feel they know a great deal. Finally, he asked Khong, 'What did you put his rice in?'

'A coconut shell.'

'That will never do.' The teacher was quite positive. 'You can't treat him in the old way any more. Try putting it on a plate.'

The old man disappeared complaintly into the kitchen and emerged a moment later with an enamelled dish full of rice mixed with fish.

'Somrit, here, Somrit.'

The dog emerged from under the house, sniffed at the plate put down in front of him and proceeded to lap up the contents.

'What did I tell you?' the teacher remarked smugly. 'These trained dogs are very particular about cleanliness.'

Somrit, finished eating, turned to bark at Khong.

'Now, what's bothering him?' the man asked.

Yawt thought for a moment then instructed Khong, 'Ah, I know, put on your best clothes.'

'What?'

'Don't be stubborn. Play along with him.'

Khong went inside to change into a new pair of black pyjama-trousers, a faded blue shirt, wound a red cloth around his waist like a sash and put on a palm leaf farmer's hat.

'How's that?' he asked as he appeared from under the roof.

The teacher pointed to the hat and motioned him to remove it.

'It makes you look too much like a peasant.'

The man obeyed and strutted into the centre of the yard, standing there elegantly.

'Somrit!' He snapped his fingers to call the dog over. The dog wagged his tail a little but in a moment started to bark again.

'Damn!'

'Not fine enough, Khong.'

Khong cocked his head to one side and murmured, 'Just like a teacher to know everything.' Then he spoke to the dog, 'I know what you're after, my Somrit. To please you I'd like to put your food on a golden plate. But what to do? As for my clothes, these are the only good ones I have.'

Before he finished, Somrit raced to the boat landing whimpering happily. When Khong and the teacher, squinting against the sun, recognized the landlord, Khong followed and raising his hands in respectful greeting said, 'You've come early today, Sir.'

'How are you? Everything all right?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Well, I see Somrit has grown a lot.'

But when he noticed the young dog making a fuss on the bank, he changed the subject.

Khong sighed deeply when he saw two foreigners sitting in the boat also eyeing Somrit.

'Hello doggie,' one of them called out.

Somrit increased his whining.

Except to tell the boatman to move on, the landlord said nothing more. When the boat was gone, Khong walked over to Somrit.

'Henlo, Henlo,' he said trying to imitate the greeting of the foreigner. He bent down to hug the dog but the instant he stroked the dog's back, Somrit snapped his teeth into Khong's shoulder.

Khong grabbed a stick and brought it down hard on Somrit's head. The dog had scurried under the house, crying, before he could strike again.

'Bite your own father, will you?' His voice trembled with anger.

The commotion brought Khem and Yawt hurrying over. When Khong pointed to the wound in his shoulder, they looked at each other and were stunned but the teacher, as usual, recovered quickly.

'He was just doing what he thought would please his trainers.'

'What should I do with the animal?' Khong wondered as he walked into the hut.

'Why ask! It's your dog, Uncle. You brought him up. You can do what you like with him'.

The teacher got back into the boat.

The old man went into the house, set a pillow against one of the posts and settled down against it, closing his eyes, his mind wandering off into the paddy fields. A furious barking roused him. About ten people were standing in front of the hut.

'Khong, I've agreed to sell this land to these people. They're going to put up a factory. It's all right for you to stay on. You needn't move until they begin to build.'

Khong assented respectfully. His eyes swept around his house, and he thought of the factory, the chimneys. His shoulder throbbed. He thought of the teacher's words, 'You brought him up...'

Long Record of Anti-Peasant Policies in the Philippines

Part I : Historical Background

Colonial Transformation of Philippine Society

There is no event in recorded Philippine history that can be studied without constant reference to agriculture. The basic structure of Philippine agriculture dates back to the time of the Spanish conquest, and later when it was twisted and stunted as a result of American rule and domination. Prior to colonial rule there is evidence that Philippine agriculture was more than just of subsistence level; today rice, the basic food of the vast majority of the people, is not produced in quantities large enough to meet minimum demands. The main victim of Spanish rule was the tao, or peasant who constituted the bulk of the rural population, whereas the caciques, or existing elite, were maintained as local administrators and served as the social basis of colonial rule. Where the tao had once only to produce for his family plus a minimal surplus that went to his patron, the needs of the colonial economy, intensified by the introduction of a cash crop economy, placed progressively heavier demands upon him. The pattern established by the Spaniards was not greatly changed by their successors, the Americans. In effect, the development of the Philippine economy was halted by the introduction of the 'integration model of development' which tied the colony's economy to the needs of the colonial power.

History of the Cooperative Movement in the Philippines

Although cooperatives have had a long history in the Philippines dating back to the second decade of American colonial rule, they have never been a success, never having achieved what the concept says they should, namely, a more equitable distribution of wealth. What is basically wrong with such a movement in a colonial society is that it is nothing but an attempt to present a form of economic democracy without solving the basic problem of imperialism and its social base, feudalism; it even stops the people from perceiving it by inculcating into their minds that the solution to their problem is self-help, that there is no need to nationalise the basic industries or redistribute the land.

The People's Response to Rural Poverty : A Historical Perspective

Through Philippine history anti-colonial movements have had an ostensibly strong economic component too and were an expression of the people's discontent with their socio-economic conditions. The earliest revolts took the form of nativistic movements and called upon the old gods of pre-colonial religions to oppose the power of Catholicism and

restore the familiar order to rural life. Later, as Catholicism came to be more and more accepted among the natives, this element of nativism declined, and at the same time local elites increasingly took advantage of mass grievances to advance their own interests. The colonial policy of nurturing the local elite led to the development of a principalia class which served as the social basis of colonial rule.

In 1892 a revolutionary secret society, 'The Katipunan', a clearly separatist organisation that aimed for no less than total independence from Spain and perceived the connection between anti-colonialism and the demands of the masses for a better life, was founded. It was later betrayed by its own leadership, who formed a pact with the Spaniards, but resistance to Spanish rule continued in almost every province, sometimes led by former members of the group. Resistance continued unabated after American occupation, and uprisings of the peasants and labouring groups against oppression occurred with regularity. In the 1930s the organised labour movement led by various left groups, gained strength, with the participation of workers in the haciendas, sugar centrals, and water fronts. From 1931 to 1932 the entire Iloilo coast was paralysed by a crippling strike of 50,000 workers. The Communist Party of the Philippines was founded in 1930, and so also the Sakdal party, which was based more on opposition to the dominant Nacionalista Party than on any concrete programme. With World War II, leftist peasant organisations formed an armed group, who came to be known as the Huks. They were initially involved in the anti-Japanese struggle, and later, under the leadership of the CPP, launched their revolution in 1948. But the capture of the core of the leadership in 1950 set back the movement.

After a period of relative quiet, the mid-60s again saw the emergence of peasant, labour and youth movements, exhibiting the same kind of fervour as the peasant and labour groups of the 1930s. It remains to be seen whether the reform programme launched by the government will finally put an end to agrarian unrest.

Part II : Present condition of the filipino peasantry

Land Ownership Patterns

A basically agrarian country, the Philippines has a peasant population of 70%; people who own the small plots of land that they till; lessees paying as high as 40% of their harvest per season, sharecroppers on a 50-50 basis, peasants displaced from their lands now living as hired hands, settlers, fishermen farmers, members of peasant households, young and old alike, who are non-formal tillers, but are nevertheless forced to make their living off the land. Only a small handful of landlords own the vast resource base, typifying the general socio-economic situation in a country where 10% of the entire 42 million population own 90% of the nation's wealth, while 90% ekes out a living on the remaining percentage.

There are two major systems of working the land prevalent in the Islands; the *kasama*, or share-tenant system, a direct feudal survival, and the *hacienda*, largely confined to sugar production, where the work is done by hired labour, reminiscent of both Spanish and American practice. *Kasama* is usually taken to mean that the absentee landlord receives one half of the crop, less half the planting and harvesting expenses. Not only are the terms in themselves highly oppressive, they are also capable of infinite variations which enable the landlords to "dispossess the cropper of the fruits of his toil to such an extent as to bind him to the farm in a manner reminiscent of medieval Europe". Division of the crop is only nominally half and half. Expenses are shared half and half, the whole amount having been advanced by the landlord in the form of *palay*. This amount, plus any other advances, plus

interest on the whole, at highly usurious rates, is repaid at the time of division in the form of palay. The rates of interest, ranging up to 100% and doubling when accounted annually, mean that in practice the tenant may have nothing left at the end of the year and usually emerges in debt.

On the haciendas, the worker is employed as he is needed, although he and his family are often permitted to live in huts in the hacienda during slack periods. During January the worker's wages are the highest and his working hours the longest; from then till October the trend is steadily downwards. From May till October, the cane fields are said to be 'closed' and only the more fortunate labourers work then two or three hours a day, the highest paid worker getting 50 centavos per day. Although hours are more than doubled during the busy milling season, wages are not commensurately increased, the average daily wage during the peak season being well under one peso. Women and children receive as little as 35-50 centavos for an 11 hour working day. Debt entraps the labourer as much as it does the tenant. The haciennero usually maintains a canteen through which wages are usually paid in the form of commodities. Profit on rice and other items handled by the canteen is frequently as high as 80%, and workers are often permitted to accumulate debts during the slack period so that wages can be held back in the busy season to cover the account.

Land Reform—Stated Aims and Actual Implementation

Having promised the success of the 'New Society' on the success of the land reform programme, President Marcos did not take a hard look at what has been achieved in the years of its implementation under martial law. In a word, the programme has been a dismal failure. Even if implemented, the effect of the programme would be limited, as only rice and corn lands are included, excluding the tenant-farmers and agricultural workers on the haciendas, who account for 22% of the labour force. The World Bank agricultural sector survey of 1974 showed that as much as 3.7 million hectares were planted with sugarcane, coconut, banana, abaca, etc., all of which are excluded from the programme.

One of the fundamental policies underlying PD 27, the legal basis and framework of the land reform programme, is the transfer of land to the tiller, which was originally meant to cover all tenanted rice and corn lands regardless of size. Thus the Department of Agrarian Reform estimated that the area to be transferred would be 1,422,988 hectares, benefitting 914,914 farmers. On May 7, 1975, however, President Marcos announced that rice and corn lands of less than 7 hectares would not be covered by Operation Land Transfer, but should be under leasehold. This drastically reduced the amount of land covered by the land transfer programme.

Small as the amount of land to be transferred is it is further decreased as a result of manipulations by the landlord in various ways - change of crops from rice and corn to other exempted crops like sugarcane, coconut, etc., subdivision of tenanted land among relatives, physically dispossessing the tenant, changing the status of the tenant to agricultural worker, or adapting the wage system, etc.

Tenure change, structural organisation and productivity increase, have been articulated as specific goals of the programme; empirical findings, however, have shown a discrepancy between programme design and actual accomplishments. Seen from the bottom end of Philippine agrarian society, the truly marginal groups are still left outside the effective scope of the programme. From the other end, the big landlords of 50 hectares or more are no longer found in the rice and corn lands, but rather in plantation lands exempt from the land reform and devoted

to the more lucrative export crops. Redistribution of income will not effect those in the highest deciles. From an overall point of view, the socio-economic consequences of land reform have been ambivalent at best, and often self-contradictory, i.e. beneficial to those who were to be expropriated, and prejudicial to those who were meant to have benefitted.

As of January, 1974, 144,538 tenants were reported to have already received Land Transfer Certificates (LTCs) for farm lots totaling 259,348 hectares. The well publicised turnover of these LTCs to the tenants constitutes the total achievement of the land reform programme to date. It should immediately be pointed out that not one tenant has received land from the government; the LTCs are not titles of ownership but, at best, an option to buy the land made available to the tenant recipients. Whether or not they will actually end up owning the land depends on various other factors, none of which look promising at the moment. Firstly, the tenant's ability to pay for the land; the fact is that the tenants live so close to the edge of subsistence that this kind of financial commitment is usually beyond them and given the difficulty of obtaining credit from other sources, they are often forced to depend on the usurious landlords in order to survive. Given the financial weakness of the tenant farmer, the government will obviously have to provide other institutional supports, not only to make it possible for him to cover his amortization payments but also to raise productivity. The government land reform propaganda realises this need to accompany land transfer with improved credit facilities, cheaper inputs and more readily available agricultural services, but the magnitude of the financial obligation this would involve would seem so high that the likelihood of its being watered down is very great.

Another factor which must be considered is the government's policy of "coddling" the landlords, which is clear from no less than the Presidential memorandum of November 25, 1972, which calls on cabinet members to "provide government assistance in every way" to the landlords. This is particularly galling because this touching governmental concern is only for those landlords who have political connections or extensive financial resources. In the final analysis, what dooms the 'New Society's' land reform programme to failure is the fact that it is not meant to change the socio-economic structures which produced the condition of landlessness in the first place; in fact there is evidence that it is geared precisely at strengthening the existing order. What is done, if at all, for the tenants is done primarily for the purpose of "letting off steam" in the rural social volcano, to deny the revolutionary movement its rural bases. In the final analysis, the only future for the Filipino peasantry the only chance they have to fulfill their demand for land and eradication of feudal exploitation lies in their participating in the struggle for national liberation.

Land Reform and Martial Law—What's in it for the Government

Land reform efforts in the Philippines were never intended to reduce the huge gap between the rich and the poor; rather, the purpose of land reform was to avert existing or potential agrarian unrest. In the martial law regime the intentions are the same, but with additional motives. The justification for martial law in the first place was to counter an alleged threat of revolution by 'communist' groups in the countryside. Marcos believed that land reform would win over the peasantry to the government's side, and therefore avoid, or at least reduce, political instability. Stability is essential in order for Marcos to stay in power more easily and to attract foreign capital, a keystone of his foreign policy.

Another motive of land reform was to disarm political opponents.

The Marcos regime during martial law has taken giant strides towards four major goals :

- 1) concentration of political and economic power in fewer hands,
- 2) turn the country into a military state,
- 3) end civil liberties, and
- 4) open the country to even more foreign capital than before.

None of these would have been possible prior to land reform due to stiff opposition from many quarters. But programmes like land reform, with wide and constant coverage on the government controlled media, helps to cajole many Filipinos to support the regime, or at least not to actively oppose it.

Agrarian reform is therefore a means to another end, one among several means that the government uses to foster stability and counter any potential unrest. Its concern for the peasantry is only superficial and it will push land reform only as far as necessary to keep unrest at a tolerable level or until land reform threatens other policies of the regime that have higher priority. Whatever its stated aims, the programme has obviously failed, in the actual implementation, due both to the government's insincerity in administering it and also resistance, both overt and subtle, from the larger landowners. It may bring some gains, at least in the short term, for the Marcos regime, in so far as it deflects unrest by converting a few thousand tenants into small landowners and holding out a promise to do the same for thousands more. In fact, the potential danger of new conflict remains, since the institutions from which the conflicts arose in the first place remain; it does not reach to the foundations of the system as do socialist reforms.

SECTION III

THE QUESTION OF WOMEN

17 | Participation of Women in Development

kamla bhasin

"The reality is that the most pervasive problem facing women in developing countries is not their status, nor the struggle for equal pay nor the provision of child care facilities-it is malnutrition. Food, water, shelter, fuel, health, and clothing remain, despite modernisation and despite growth in the Gross National Product or per capita income, the basic realities of life. And on the whole it is the women who bear the responsibility for ensuring that these needs are met, for ensuring day-to-day survival. It is the women who make do."

ELIZABETH REED

And it is women who are forced to make 'deadly' decisions of which Appadurai, an Indian poet, writes in his poem entitled "The Arithmetic of Poverty :

*Decide, Mother,
Who goes without.
Is it Rama, the strongest?
Who may not need it that day
or Bala, the weakest?
Who may not need it much longer
Or perhaps Sita?
Who may be expendable.*

*Decide mother,
kill a part
of yourself
as you resolve the dilemma*

*Decide, mother
decide.....
and hate.*

Ironical though it may sound, the fact is that there is a special need to consider problems relating to the participation of women in development whereas this is not considered necessary in the case of men. This is proof enough that all is not well with the role and participation of women in development.

It is now increasingly recognised that when development does not take place with the aim of achieving social justice, and when the poor continue to be exploited, women are exploited even more. They are victimised and oppressed more than men within the same social grouping and are more handicapped in terms of realising their potential and social status. Chairman Mao once said that Chinese men have to carry the burden

of three mountains: oppression from outside, feudal oppression and the burden of their own backwardness. But Chinese women he said, are burdened by four mountains; the fourth one being man. What Chairman Mao said about China seems true of most developing societies.

It will be wrong to make sweeping generalizations about a group as large as one half of humanity, because women by no means constitute a homogenous group of human beings. Even when one talks about rural women as a separate group from the urban, as in this consultation, one is talking about nothing less than 1,000 million women in the developing countries.

The patterns of participation in development of such a vast mass will naturally differ according to social status, belief, education, marital status etc. For instance, in a village in India, may be found the following different levels and kinds of women's roles-

- High caste women: no outdoor activity, practice of purdah (veil) prevalent;
- High caste men: supervision of employed labour;
- Cultivating caste women: domestic duties, no bread earning activity
- Cultivating caste men: work on their own land;
- Low caste men and women: work on the fields, market and at home;
- Poorest low caste men and women: paid work on other people's fields & homes.

A Pathetic Profile

According to an FAO paper the majority of rural women in developing countries live in extreme poverty. They are essentially among small farmers, share-croppers, tenants, nomads and landless labourers. It has been estimated that three out of every ten rural women never have enough to eat. Poverty and hunger are thus a normal way of life for a large proportion of rural women in developing countries.

The following passage presents a pathetic profile of poor rural women:-

"We know also that their life is one of drudgery-in both of their main roles, housewife and farm worker. There is the constant concern of finding enough food to feed the family. When food is available, its preparation has to be done with primitive tools and methods, requiring tedious hours. The rural women also face additional problems of food preservation and storage, if food is not to be wasted. Her decisions strongly influence the daily food intake of her family, but she does not usually have access to information on nutrition and food values. Without adequate training, she sets the standards of sanitation and hygiene and the conditions of the home and the environmental surroundings. She is burdened by a lack of easy access to adequate water supplies and kitchen fuel. Her pregnancies are in many cases too frequent and infant mortality rates are high, with health services few and far between." (FAO, 1975)

Participatory Development : Some Conceptual Clarifications

There are many reasons to believe that GNP is a god that has failed, for what has passed to be development (understood as increased production) has tended to reinforce and exaggerate imbalances and inequalities within and between societies. It is accepted by more and more people (though not practised yet by many) that growth and development should be coupled with distributive justice.

Development is an integrated process with economic, social, political, cultural and moral aspects. Primarily, it should be a process of liberation of people from poverty and from the exploitative mechanisms that perpetuate poverty and injustice.

Development, thus, is essentially a problem of transferring power to the majority of the people, and producing more for the felt and basic needs both material and cultural.

People have to be subjects, not objects of development, and finally development should be seen as a dynamic and continuous process leading on to socially and economically viable arrangements for human growth and survival.

Although it is recognised that redistributive justice cannot be achieved without a participatory form of development, in actual practice, attempts at involving people in social change (if any), have usually been half hearted. In the name of participation people have been "made" to participate in programmes which have been prepared by the elite from the centres of power. And in most cases the benefits of these 'participatory' programmes have been cornered by the better off people. The deprived sections of the population in the rural areas have derived little benefit. Most governments have not only not encouraged genuine participation but on the contrary have co-opted or emasculated the genuine efforts of the poorer sections to organize themselves for development.

Transformation of Consciousness

People's participation in development has to be understood as participation in economic production, ownership in the means of production as well as participation in decision-making. Participation should be both a means and an end in itself.

So, the participation of women in development has to be seen in the larger context of involving the poor in a self-directed process of development; yet because of their particular problems, special efforts need to be made to integrate women into such a process.

Instead of 'making' women take part in something which is planned for them, their active participation should be sought in economic production and in decision making at all levels of society from the domestic to the international policy-making level.

Although participation in economic production is basic to improving the lot of women, by itself it is not enough. In addition, it is important for women to participate in political decision-making as it is politics which determines the direction and pace of most development plans.

Moreover, a fuller participation of women in development requires an all round transformation in the consciousness of both men and women as also in the socio-cultural norms, the mass media and pattern of education, all of which at present tend to perpetuate a passive unequal role for women in social, economic and political affairs.

Problems of Non-Recognition

There are two aspects of this so-called problem of participation of women in development: one is that women have not participated to a desirable extent in modern development processes, but the second and more important aspect is that even when they have contributed to gross national production, their efforts have not been given due recognition by the urban educated academicians, journalists, administrators and politicians who usually happen to be men. What is worse is that most men in these positions do not even have an adequate understanding of the problem.

It should be well known, at least to those who have some first hand experience of rural life, that women, particularly at the lower caste/class level, have always been actively involved in the affairs of economic production. Their contribution to agricultural production has not been less than that of men. Both sexes have shared the pre-harvest and post-harvest manual cum technological operations-if not equally, then not all that unequally either.

In addition to work in the fields, women have been involved in the crucial task of reproduction of the labour force; reproduction both in terms of giving birth to children as well as looking after the family and replenishing the energy of the present labour force.

It is regrettable and unfortunate that even in the face of these facts, most planners, administrators and experts continue to have a male image of the Asian farmer. The very language of most of these gentlemen (and ladies) betrays their discriminatory perceptions. Thus while referring to the Asian farmer(s), they invariably use masculine pronouns like 'men', 'he' 'himself'. Since half of Asia's farmers are women, they at least need to be addressed in a language that does not do them grammatical injustice.

"But Where are the Women ?

The following is a good example of how reporters and researchers somehow manage to focus attention mainly on men: After going through over 150 news reports on the development of a village in India and finding no mention of the role played by women, a woman journalist wrote (or mourned?), "But, where were the women? My instinct told me they were there, so did my observation. You could see the women bringing in fodder for the cattle, cutting grass or tough stalks of "Jawar," carrying these loads over slippery field bunds. Yet this was a role that rarely got reported, a role that all the men and women in our team had perhaps deemed not worth reporting". (Summi Sridharan, 1975)

"Non-Economic" Activities

Rural women have also been neglected statistically. In the absence of adequate data on their activities and attitudes, it is very difficult to assess their actual levels of participation or to formulate policies for improving their condition.

Social scientists have managed to go a step further in this neglect. Their highly academic and 'scientific' definition of 'work' and 'employment' have excluded tasks like child-bearing, and child-rearing; managing the household, looking after the animals and various other tasks related to agriculture. These tasks have been relegated to being classified as "non-economic" activities with no money value attached to them.

It is almost comical, if not a case of 'cooking up a thesis', for academicians to first define 'work' in such a way that most of what is done by women is non-work and then to regret that women do not work or participate adequately in the various tasks of development'.

Development planners (including UN experts) have helped to perpetuate this regrettable trend. As has been emphasized in some recent documents of the United Nations agencies, most projects have been planned, formulated or implemented with scant regard for the employment of women and their contributions to farm productivity and income. Inadequate attention has generally been paid to the fact that, in many of the projects, women make up a significant proportion of the labour force. The result has been that the development potential of the project has not been fully realized nor the status of women or their contribution to development substantially enhanced.

This trend is also reflected in the sex composition of most conferences and workshop. While it is the women of Asia who deal with Asia's nutrition problems, as usual we have the spectacle of the men of Asia doing most of the planning even in this sphere of development. Participation of women at the village level indeed exists; it is rather missing at these 'higher' levels where men continue to talk about integrating women into development at the same time discriminating against them.

In the light of the foregoing remarks, it seems that the first task facing those who want to integrate women in development is to educate the "educators" and "developers" to enable them to at least perceive the important role of women in Asian farm life. This ominous 'silence' or 'blindness' about the role of women needs to be broken. Women have to be first integrated into the perceptions and consciousness of decision-makers. It is only after this is achieved that the question of integrating them into development can arise.

Secondly, and here it would be pertinent to quote from an FAO document - "If improvements are to be achieved in rural women's involvement in development, reform must begin at home, that is, in the development agencies themselves. For one thing, higher priority should be given to funds for women's programmes. They all too often tend to be cut in times of stringency."

"But the main issue is one of personnel. Most technical assistance experts in the field are men, except for the "feminine" or "reserved" domain of home economics, and they tend to approach the question of women's involvement both in the giving and receiving of assistance as requiring only hasty, marginal or formal consideration. In short, the first people needing to be developed are the developers themselves." (Colombo Sacco, 1975)

Thirdly, much more research needs to be done on 'women in development', and this research should "involve posing new questions, developing new concepts and corresponding measurements, gathering new kinds of data and using new methodologies, both in research design and in data collection. A thorough rethinking and re-examination of old ideas and beliefs is called for. The old patterns and paradigms, the old statistics and data, the old approaches and methods do not fit properly when we use them on women. They were developed for men, in a men's world, and even by men. Moreover they were often devised for a developed, not a developing society." (Monica Fong, 1976).

Recent Studies on Women's Participation

It is important for all those concerned about the integration of women in development to study and analyse the actual effects which development plans have had on women and to examine more carefully the particular historical and economic forces that affect women's position.

It has been naively believed for too long that technological advancement and 'modernisation' leads to an improvement in the position of women. Some recent studies, however, provide enough data to question if not to give up such beliefs.

Studies conducted in recent years on the extent and nature of women's participation in development have shown that:

1. As long as the economy was largely subsistence based, the productivity of women was at least equal to, if not greater, than that of men (Boserup, 1970);
2. The introduction of more intensive agricultural production, market and money economies and commercialisation tended to exclude women from productive roles in the modern sector and phase them out of traditional productive roles as part of the process of development (Laurel Bossen, 1975).

Transfer of Rights from Women to Men

Ester Boserup cites specific examples of how European "modernisers" have contributed to the worsening of women's position in many African countries. Europeans, with an agricultural tradition of male-farming using ploughs, have consistently introduced modern agricultural technology and cash crops to males only, ignoring the traditional female role in production. This one-sided introduction of modern technology has tended to introduce a significant gap between the productivity of male and female labour in agriculture, so that female labour has become relatively less productive. According to Boserup, "the transfer of rights from women to men was often felt to be an injustice committed by the Europeans" (Boserup, 1970)

Similarly, in societies where women have traditionally been active traders, commercialisation has reduced the relative importance of women. It appears that modernisation or economic "development" has an impact on women's role in trade that is remarkably similar to its impact on women in agricultural production i.e. it exerts strong pressures to reduce or limit the traditional productive activities of women and severely restricts or prohibits their entry into modern productive occupations. (Laurel Bossen 1975: 594)

Trends in India

Writing about India, Vina Mazumdar indicates similar trends- "The masses of our women do not have to be persuaded that they must work. They have always worked and they understand very well that work is their only means of survival. Their displacement from the traditional economic functions has been caused by development.... if the present trend continues, even agricultural development will result in more displacement of women workers- a process which cannot be adequately balanced by development of industries and services" (Mazumdar, 1975). She goes on to say that the process of development instead of widening opportunities for women's participation has been reducing their sphere of activities.

Gradual withdrawal of women from their agricultural base is likely to worsen their status in society. Reduction in women's participation

in economic production is bound to result in lesser participation by them in decision making and lesser control on financial resources.

Bias in Extension Programmes

Given the lack of consciousness regarding the active participation of women in traditional agriculture in most societies (with local variations), and given the built-in attitudes of male dominance, it is inevitable for women not to be given due attention in schemes to improve and modernize agriculture. In face of the objective reality of various functions performed by women in and around the farm, this has amounted to a failure in planning and project formulation. In Asia, such failures have been almost endemic, revealing as they do the western cultural traits and class consciousness of most administrators and academics.

With men mainly in the saddle and in the minds of planning and administrative personnel, there has been an all round neglect of devising improved methods of agriculture, keeping in view the importance of women as potential 'customers' for innovative agriculture. Most extension and training programmes have been aimed at men farmers.

As a result of this male bias in extension services and in project design, an increasing gap between male and female productivity has become apparent. While men are encouraged to learn modern cultivation methods, women continue to use traditional methods. This usually results in women being discouraged to participate in agriculture. And many actually drop-out once there is a discernible increase in their husbands' income. In this way women lose their position as being (almost) equal bread-earners as men, with consequent changes for the worse in their status and position in society.

The impact of male-oriented agricultural development strategies is explained well by Ester Boserup who shows how such development has the unavoidable effect of enhancing the prestige of men and lowering the status of women. "It is the men who do the modern things. They handle industrial inputs while women perform the degrading manual jobs; men often have the task of spreading fertilizer in the fields, while women spread manure; men ride the bicycle and drive the lorry, while women carry headloads, as did their grandmothers. In short, men represent modern farming in the village, women represent the old drudgery."

An FAO document points out: 'Despite the major participation of women in agriculture, extension and other rural development services seldom reach her. Even when they do, they are seldom oriented towards women's role as decision-maker in the planting, harvesting and marketing of crops. Even when she is the head of the farm household, she does not find easy access to credit, marketing assistance or membership in farmers' cooperatives. Nor has the introduction of modern technology such as farm mechanisation been of much help to her. It is usually the man who has access to and derives the main benefits from the new techniques, and any additional hand labour that is required is relegated to women. All these limitations and conditions continue to keep her at the level of an unskilled farm labourer and severely handicap her from assuming a role in the wider community, outside the farm and the home.'

Education and Training

In the field of education also women have been left way behind men. In almost all the developing countries, women constitute the majority of the illiterate population. When educational facilities and resources are limited, girls who join school drop out earlier to help with home tasks and also to get married at an early age. This limitation further

widens the gap between opportunities open to men and women.

The vocational and technical training of girls is even more neglected. It is rather their role in the family which has been recognised and emphasised. Hence most training programmes planned for women are in activities such as sewing, housecraft and cooking. These are important areas for training but they do not help women to be gainfully employed in a greater choice of occupations.

Their training in modern agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy technology, etc. has been neglected. Therefore, while women are being displaced from their traditional roles, they are not being adequately integrated and absorbed into new economic opportunities.

Conclusion

It would be fairly easy at this stage to make a long list of recommendations and suggestions for a 'concrete plan of action' to involve women in development. Such a list is not being presented because there is no dearth of existing suggestions and recommendations. Logically worked out and strongly worded resolutions have been passed by any number of governments and organizations without changing the realities very much. Moreover it is not only the ignorance of planners about suitable plans that hinders the participation of women in development; a major hindrance seems to be a lack of commitment and political will to institute widespread changes in the social relations of production and power structures that arise thereof. Moreover, the question of women touches the most personal and even sub-conscious areas of life. Changes are thus required in the perceptions, attitudes and even in the very consciousness of people. It is the objective conditions in each society and the readiness of at least a section of its population to start the cultural revolutions required, which will determine the course and pace of action. Pontifications, recommendations, resolutions can be no substitute for commitment to bring about, required changes.

To ensure that women are truly and wholly integrated in all aspects of development and at all levels of society is undoubtedly an enormous, tiring and even a frustrating task. But there is no escaping from it for development itself is impossible without the participation of women. If you are for development, you have to be for women.

As far as nutrition is concerned, it is basic to development. More specifically, malnutrition is an important indicator of maldistribution of income and overall poverty. But undernutrition in terms of caloric intake and/or protein deficiency is particularly a problem for children who need about twice as much protein and energy in relation to overall body weight as adults require. Pregnant and nursing mothers are another nutritionally vulnerable group. The problem is further compounded by the low status of girls and women in many cultures. In conditions of food shortage in a poor home, the tendency is for boys and men to be first on the list for whatever little there is on the day's menu with only the left over's going to the women-folk.

It is now believed in medical-scientific circles that a mother's diet during her own childhood can produce a disturbed pregnancy and adversely affect her child's birth-weight. Thus, malnutrition that currently prevails amongst girls can imperil the health of the coming generation.

On the other hand women, more than men, are the ones who handle matters related to nutrition. They not only cook food but play a vital role in producing it. Women are the ones who can ensure the nutritive values of cooked food and who are principally responsible for storing and preserving food.

Thus, in the sphere of nutrition more than in other sectors, not a single step forward can be taken without involving women. In fact it seems impossible not to involve them, for they ARE involved, they are right there at the frontline of nutrition. But as malnutrition is only a symptom and not a cause of poverty, women must be as involved as men in the struggle against poverty and injustice. Without such involvement, poverty may be overcome, but the exploitation and oppression of women would remain unchanged.

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18 Women in North Vietnam

kiran daniel

lee soo jin

The War Created a New Role for Women

The situation of women in North Vietnam has changed radically in the last 20 years. In 1960, the Head of State Ho Chi Minh stated, in connection with the new family law, that "without full equality for women the construction of socialist society is not complete".

The war and national mobilization have strengthened the position of women in society. When men were mobilized women had to take over agricultural and industrial work as well as local administration. There were areas where 80 per cent of the agricultural workers were women. In the factories where the men workers left because of the war the work force sometimes consisted almost exclusively of women. The women made sure that work and production continued in spite of the war. They took care of the family and brought up their children to be citizens of a unified society. They took part in defence and were prepared to depart for the front if necessary.

Women work under the motto 'Ba Dam Dong', the three obligations; production, family and defence.

The Historical Background

The old laws of the Le dynasty of the 15th century gave women rights which made them almost the equals of men.

But the situation of women grew worse under the influence of China and the Confucian tradition. The Gia Long law of the 19th century gave women very limited rights. Marriages were arranged by parents, usually when children were small. The possibility of divorce was minimal. Men often had several wives who lacked even basic rights and were utilized as unpaid labour. They were to obey the first wife and their children were to regard the first wife as their actual mother. They could be sent away if either the husband or the first wife wanted to get rid of them.

The situation of women did not change appreciably during the French colonial rule, when both the sexes were given the right to vote, making them eligible for election from the age of 18. In the elections of 1946, 10 women were elected to the National Assembly.

The first constitution, 1946, established equality of women and men. In the New Work Law of 1947 the principle of equal pay for equal work was expressed for the first time. In 1950 the marriage laws were changed so that women and men obtained the same rights upon divorce. They personally (and not their families) gained the right to choose their marriage partner. In the beginning it was difficult for the law to win support in a country

where the old traditions were firmly entrenched. In newspapers of that time there are many examples of local court cases and disputes concerning the interpretation and meaning of the new laws. In the New Family Law, issued by Ho Chi Minh in 1960, polygamy was abolished. The law includes four main principals.

Child Care

Because of the war women have become irreplaceable in production and defence. They have also had sole responsibility for the children since the men have been mobilised. Great efforts have been made to quickly organise collective care for children.

Nurseries, which are usually linked to the factories and agricultural cooperatives, are often provisional. The personnel lack any lengthy schooling. Most of the children from ages three to six are placed in nurseries. Preschools exist for children from the ages of five to seven. Approximately one million children, or almost all children between five and seven years of age, attend pre-schools today. Most children in Hanoi and other densely populated areas were evacuated to the rural regions during the war.

Special Advantages

Pregnant women have two months of paid leave in connection with delivery and also receive an extra cash supplement. They need not work night shift two months before and six months after giving birth and have a one-hour shorter working day until the child is one year old. The state helps mothers with child care and housework until they have recuperated. Rationing of meat and milk is not applicable to pregnant or nursing women.

Rapid Population Growth

The rate of population growth is 3.5 per cent per year, which is a high figure even for underdeveloped countries. This creates great problems in production and for the women themselves. Information about family planning techniques and cost free contraceptives is given in connection with health controls for mothers and children. Most women have access to midwives or other medical expertise during pregnancy. Many are delivered by midwives in delivery homes, dispensaries or provincial hospitals.

The War and the Future

The mobilisation of the entire population due to the drawn-out war has meant that women have been incorporated into the work of society much quicker than would otherwise have been the case, both in production and in the People's Assemblies on the local levels. They have shown themselves to be competent in handling matters which men were earlier considered to be best suited for. It is impossible to say whether women will be forced out when men return to their civil functions after the war. However, the work of rebuilding will require such a large amount of work for many years in the future that the risk of unemployment is small. Much has happened in a short time for the women of North Vietnam. The traditional conceptions of men's and women's roles which predominate in the greater parts of the world probably still exist to a certain extent in North Vietnam as well. But the experience of the war, Ho Chi Minh's statements and the party's official line on the issue of women have surely been important for the Vietnamese women's struggle for their rights.

The Husband is the Employer

wajihuddin ahmed

The word development looks like an inkblot to me. There are many strange pictures in an inkblot, one dissolving into another, and different people see different pictures. I would hate to carry such a fluid word to people who want to know exactly what you have to offer and what you expect. Yet, we do carry it to villages and hope that some meanings will sprout. Strangely enough, they do sprout. The word may stay murky but the man who brings it grows transparent; and so does the system he represents. People who have anything to do with him come to know that he may produce some money for repairing a dirty drain in the village but not for repairing the place of worship. He may propose cooperatives for farmers but he will do nothing to release them from the web of the money-lender. He may speak about the most profitable crop but he will not procure transport to carry it to the market. "This much and no more, is the message that comes loud and clear each time, even if it is unspoken...

The Size of the Cake

Now that all of us are going to take the gift of development to village women, what should we point our finger as to make them understand what it is like and what is worth?

There would be no need to point at anything if they saw their men having a grand time as monopolists of the thing called development. They would themselves demand a share of what men have. But an average village man's work is barely more productive and no more enjoyable than the labour of his female counterpart. What can she ask to share as an equal except poverty and drudgery? Female demand for economic parity will grow when there are more and better opportunities for the rural group as a whole. What matters now is the size of the cake and not its male and female proportions. Perhaps village women would place village liberation first and join it as villagers, not as women.

Perhaps political motives require a conceptual division of rural development on a sexual basis followed by an attempt to correct an assumed imbalance. The same motives artificially partitioned rural and urban development and gave birth to the once popular vogue of rural community development.

Villages and cities are poor or rich together. If city people have a greater capacity to consume the produce of fields, farmers prosper. If villagers can buy more things made in cities, urban employment expands. It is, therefore, important to increase productivity in both sectors. But the philosophers of rural development ignored this interdependence and the need to strengthen it. It was implied that city people were doing

quite well because they enjoyed more civic amenities than village folk. Rural community development, therefore, became an attempt to siphon some amenities to villages through official channels. It meant giving cement and money for paving streets or building drains, not increasing the community's own capacity to finance its needs. It did not strengthen the base of the village economy. Attention to symptoms replaced attention to the disease, and charity termed development became an excuse for not making the structural changes needed both in urban and rural sectors. I would not be surprised if the same fraud creeps into services and programmes for rural women, and they become an excuse for not changing the whole rural fabric. It will be suggested that the male leg of rural development is healthy but the female needs special attention. The special attention will be packed in a bulging bag and no one will be allowed to look inside. When the bag is finally opened, it may deliver a scientific recipe for making pickle, plus a lot of air.

Women are no longer lured by prepackaged development bags. You have to tell them precisely and truthfully what is on your rural development maps and then let them decide which maps they like best.

Three kinds of maps are likely to be offered: maps "appropriate to womanhood," with "royal roads" to perfect housekeeping and mothercraft. Be prepared to protect such a map, as well as your eyes. Village women have never felt inadequate as wives and mothers, and they do not believe that city ladies can instruct them in those vocations. Some maps project an image of the village woman as an expert of feminine crafts, associated with subsistence agriculture. Those maps may show commercial outlets for rugs and mats, eggs and honey. They would create a mild interest in some older women who may feel that something is better than nothing. The really attractive maps would outline a development that is least rural and least womanish. They would point to routes that lead away from the narrowness of village economy and its human relationships. They would present the kind of opportunities that may also interest young men no longer keen to inherit the plough.

A Shadowy Existence

These opportunities are to be found in the decentralized manufacture of processed primary products, consumer goods and light engineering goods-commodities that are labour intensive, resource-based and require simple technology, small investment, cheap or little fuel. A rural network of medium industry or agro-industry, producing both for export and home consumption, should teach the wearers of galabias, saris and sarongs to get into workmen's overalls and tinker with small machines. They should be absorbed not merely as unskilled or semiskilled operators, but taught repair, maintenance, supervision, management, accountancy, storekeeping, salesmanship and all other accoutrements of industrial enterprise. The purpose should be not just to employ hands but to help persons to be creative in a new kind of work association. The opportunity is greater when the production unit is small and responsibilities varied. The new work association should act as an instrument of social change, not just as a means of economic improvement. The work association in the peasant economy is the peasant family. It keeps the female worker employed but invisible. She contributes her physical and biological energy to the work unit, is fed and clothed in return, but her identity as an autonomous being remains suppressed. She works but does not act.

She minds children and farm animals, but her husband negotiates with the bigger world. An energetic and skilful pair of hands plus a productive uterus make a good peasant wife but not a fully creative and responsible person. The orientation of peasant women cannot be changed without overthrowing the totalitarianism of the peasant family.

A peasant woman becomes nameless as soon as she is physically and biologically mature. She is known as somebody's wife or as somebody's mother. To be recognized as a person in her own right, to become an acting individual, she must build a link with the world outside her family. The strongest link is economic, one of contributing skill and energy to the social whole and earning the material and psychological rewards of this contribution. Individuality grows out of interaction.

Peasant women the world over continue to live a shadowy existence. The two recent efforts to restructure rural life; land reform and the green revolution-have failed to draw them into wider economic networks. They remain enclosed within the work cell of the family as unpaid labourers, unrelated to larger systems of interdependence. Land reforms turned tenants into landowners, but titles of ownership were conferred on male heads of households. Credit societies and marketing associations were ushered in to replace the moneylender but membership was offered to the new proprietor and manager of land, not to the proprietress or manageress. Incentive to increase productivity motivated men and made them more ambitious. Decisions to use improved seed or chemical fertilizer were invariably male decisions. Women went along with plans and decisions made by men, perhaps shared benefits but not initiative and responsibility. The disappearance of the landlord and the moneylender and the availability of technical inputs promised a higher income for the family. But a higher income for the family does not alter the role and status of its female members.

Those women who make few plans and decisions in their daily lives can hardly take initiative and act with confidence as family planners. The basic issue, therefore, is altering the power structure in the rural family. Any trend toward a democratic pattern of family living is thwarted by the fact that the husband is also the employer and terms of employment are unchangeable. Employment of women in rural industry takes away the economic basis of male dominance. If the family ceases to serve as a labour pool for its male head and limits itself to sexual, reproductive and companionate functions, the distribution of power is likely to become less uneven.

A Cheap Labour Force

It is certainly possible to achieve greater autonomy for women even in a strictly agricultural setting. The Chinese have achieved it in their own way. The female farm worker in China is an individual working for and rewarded by the community, not an unpaid helpmate of the husband. But altering productive roles is far more difficult than increasing technical efficiency. The Chinese example may not be easy to follow everywhere.

Rural development in the women's sector, therefore, at best aims at teaching skills related to the work they are already doing as homemakers. What they really need are institutions giving them a wider work environment: polytechnic schools for village girls, banks for rural businesswomen, industries compelled or induced to employ a prescribed proportion of female workers, agricultural cooperatives with a fixed quota of female membership. If rural development torchbearers do not have the will or capacity to adopt such radical measures, they should pack up their pickle-making stuff and get out of villages as soon as they can. By staying on, they only perpetuate the exploitation of a cheap, manipulable and stagnant labour force.

Employment that defines a women's work and income as independently her own either does not exist in rural areas of poor countries or is found only at very low levels. But if we do succeed in creating such employment, we can expect a series of changes in values, attitudes and motives bearing on fertility.

Women's age at marriage in peasant communities, particularly in Asia, has always been very low, which contributes to their higher fertility. If daughters begin to earn and contribute to the family income, fathers are no longer anxious to marry them off as early as possible. A self-supporting girl also prefers to stay longer in the marriage market, waiting for her best chance. Both these factors cause an upward shift in age at marriage, as has been observed in Sri Lanka and to some extent in the Philippines.¹

Boys are valued highly in a peasant family; they provide labour, protection, security to aged parents and continuity of male succession. An Indian peasant, therefore, does not even think of birth control unless he has at least two sons.² Waiting for the required number of sons to be born increases family size, even for those who eventually adopt birth control. However, if a daughter proves to be an economic asset to her family through employment, parents may be persuaded to begin family limitation when the family is still small.

Control Vests in Men

Women who feel powerless, ineffective and aimless are observed to be less capable of controlling fertility and have larger families.³ Self-confidence is identified as a characteristic of the person who takes to family planning.⁴ Adequately rewarded employment outside the home can make women more conscious of their ability to control their circumstances through planned parenthood.

Full-time and lifelong motherhood is a widely approved role for women, whereas single-minded pursuit of fatherhood is not considered a legitimate occupation for men. Motherhood will cease to serve as the sole expression of feminine status and achievement if work roles receive reward and social recognition.

Physical demands and conditions of work outside the home are usually incompatible with a large-sized family. If employment is made attractive family size is likely to shrink.

Homebound women do not have easy access to family planning information and services. The place of work can be not only a convenient delivery point for assistance, but women working together can also learn from and be stimulated by each other's experience.

These inferences are not just speculative. Statistics confirm a fairly consistent association between women's employment and lower fertility, except for domestic service and other low-grade work. Employment is not a by-product of lower fertility as was once suspected.⁵ On the other hand, among groups that do not provide employment opportunities to women, the little family planning that exists is almost exclusively the result of male initiative. No birth control is possible as long as all control vests in men.

Employment of rural women in industrial occupations can only be a part of a larger policy to disperse industrial production away from large urban centres. Thus, its demographic effect will extend to the distribution of population. Fewer people will drift to cities in search of nonexistent jobs. Villages will acquire facilities capable of attracting urban skills, resources and stimuli and thus overcome their stagnation. Rural economy will also become less vulnerable to disturbances caused by weather fluctuations and to pests and diseases. These disturbances bring floods of people from villages to cities.

The contribution that a change in the occupational status of peasant women can make to the solution of population problems is not

hidden knowledge. Then what stops action? Who eats up the blueprints of change, which are prepared so often and with such enthusiasm? Male chauvinist piglets?

Asian women are prisoners of the family-based system of production. Unlike the Irish, they cannot leave it and emigrate to the U.S. and U.K. The system survives because it ensures low-cost production. If cotton, jute and coffee producers did not command the unpaid labour of their wives and children, the world would not be buying these commodities as cheaply as it does.

More Work, Less Pay

Farm products must be exchanged for manufactures at ever worsening terms because industrial prices keep rising faster than agricultural prices. More bags of coffee and more bales of cotton must be delivered every year for each truck. To produce them, the peasant can make his wife and children work harder at their tasks without paying them more and not run the risk of a labour strike. He can also produce more children or take more wives to meet his labour needs. But the truck maker cannot cut his cost by reducing his wage rate. His labour is limited, expensive and organized. Thus, the family system of production facilitates a transfer of income from poor to rich countries.

If we were to turn unpaid agricultural workers into wage earners, either on farms or factories, who would pay the wages? Unless there is a transfer of income from the world centres of affluence to the peasant periphery, the change will not occur. But this process may be defined as the economic strangulation of the more fortunate. Peasant women are victims of something more than male chauvinism.

The central question, therefore, is one of paying the cost of demographic and economic change in the peasant world. Those who can pay must not only provide the pill but also finance the social changes that make the pill relevant.

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SECTION IV

DEVELOPEMENT STRATEGIES SOME CASE STUDIES

20 | Alternative Development Strategies

harsh sethi

While there is a great deal of talk of rural development and the problems of the rural poor, the fact of the matter is that the conditions of rural areas are deteriorating, and within the rural social structure the position of the lower strata is worsening. Politically, too, the last few years have seen both an increase in the power of the urban based educated elite and the alliance of this elite structure with the upper and middle castes in the rural areas. On the whole, 'rural development' is more rhetoric than reality and, on present indications (with concentration of economic power and a continuous narrowing of the base of the political system), there seems little chance of matters improving."¹

These and various other trends of increasing poverty, inequality, growing landlessness and unemployment on the one hand, and a growing centralisation of power coupled with a more frequent and intense use of the repressive machinery by the State to crush any local movements have been clearly in evidence for some time now. What is more shocking is the utter incapability of the macro-organisations of the poor -- the communist parties, the trade unions, the kisan sabhas -- to act effectively against these trends.

While the failures of the larger organisations are recognised, they are rarely discussed. One of the major reasons for this failure seems to lie in the very structure of these organisations -- the relationship between the leaders and the cadres within the organisation and the cadres and the working masses they purport to represent -- as well as in the methodology of change followed. The traditional macro-organisations suffer not only from a rigid hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, making an innovative and flexible approach difficult if not impossible, they seem blessed with the most egoistical attitude with respect to their own infallibility. Consequently little is learnt from the people themselves. Further, the concentration on a partial approach to change, relying only on economic, social or cultural issues, does not permit the development of a vehicle which can adequately reflect the total aspirations of the oppressed."²

In response to the continuing negative trends and failures of the macro-organisations, a number of interesting and innovative micro-experiments have sprung up over the country. In fact the two major thrusts were in the early seventies -- after the collapse of the Naxalbari movement, and after the revocation of the Emergency -- both symptomatic of the failure of our political system and its political agents.

This is not to claim that all these experiments arose out of such a social situation, or even that all of them are innovative. In fact a large number of sterile voluntary agencies have functioned under the

Sarvodaya banner, or under foreign agencies such as the OXFAM. Today, we also have a number of 'professional' voluntary agencies affiliated to banks or business houses in the field. But what we will discuss are not such money making, or 'social engineering' experiments, but those which have a deep sympathy with the people and strive to do something about the oppressive social situation -- not as leaders, but as co-partners in a process of change. These may have been basically spontaneous attempts, only later organised and co-ordinated by the more advanced cadre, or attempts which deliberately chose strategies based on an explicit understanding of the problem. In either case, what needs to be 'caught' is the involvement and creativity of the common people which made some 'success' in these experiments possible.

We will consider experiments which are going on at different levels. There are cases of simple partial intervention with innovations in education, health, technology etc, as also cases where organisations of the poor have emerged and are carrying on the struggle on different issues. We thus have agencies set up mainly for marketing such as SWRC, Tilonia, or the Marrianad Fishermen's Co-operative; agencies for health such as Raj Arole's hospital at Jamkhed, or Sanjivi's experiment in Tamil Nadu; agencies for educational work such as Kishore Bharti, Hoshangabad, or Seva Mandir, Udaipur; and agencies which have resulted in organisations of the poor such as the Bhoomi Sena, Thana, or the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Dhanbad. Interestingly enough we have also had organisations such as the Nellore Joint Farming Co-operative Society, or the Toddy Tappers Union in Warangal, which have emerged essentially out of the work of bureaucrats.

Partial Interventions

The Jamkhed Experiment : In October 1970 work on a comprehensive rural health project was started in Jamkhed (Maharashtra). The basic departure from normal health delivery schemes was to be in its emphasis on community participation in decision making, with the ultimate objective of owning the programme in their respective communities and villages; the development of a referral system to suit the local conditions; the use of local resources to solve health problems; and the attempt to evolve total -- not fragmented -- health care, integrating promotional, preventive, and curative care.³ Though the project was started with outside funds, the community leaders were involved in it from the very beginning.

The importance of Jamkhed as a health experiment is not in the demonstration that an inexpensive delivery system of health care can be built up with community participation and involvement, but in its realisation, even in its 'success', that health for the sake of health was not a viable model. In the very beginning they realised that food and water took priority over health. While with existing food production it was possible in some places to reorganise the nutritional package -- especially for the under-fives and mothers -- they soon ran into a food constraint. As the experiment could not continue indefinitely on borrowed food, the community had to go in for improved production techniques. Agencies interested in agriculture and irrigation were contacted. Simultaneously other agro-based projects for poultry and dairying were taken up. The whole programme took on a much wider canvas -- that of socio-economic development of the total block.

A few words need to be said about how the system operates. From community involvement in designing and implementing the scheme to staff recruitment and training, the project functions as an integrated one with emphasis on participation at all levels. There is a happy marriage of professionals and non-professionals and the doctor is not permitted to dominate. The emphasis is on developing people together rather than instructing them about what should be done. Health projects are many,

and a fair number have recorded success, but rarely has change in the attitude of the local population to health and health agents come about. Only when such changes start occurring do the leaders become dispensable, and the basic intelligence of the people surfaces. This seems to be on the cards at Jamkhed.

The results of Jamkhed are impressive, especially in terms of the training of health delivery agents and in the health statistics of the region. It simultaneously teaches us the limitations of a partial intervention. While Jamkhed has gone much further than the KASA project, Thana, or even Sanjivi's experiment in Tamil Nadu, constraints have already started developing wherein the Jamkhed experiment may have to get into much more ticklish areas. In fact serious rural health schemes seem to follow Zaffarullah Chowdhary's path in moving from an intervention in health to the development of an organisation of the poor.⁴

An Educational effort : In the early seventies three men arrived in a village in Madhya Pradesh to set up an institution which would 'revolutionise' rural education. The idea was to set up a residential school which would take up skill creation as well as leadership training sessions for the youth. Six years later that team has expanded to ten people and the original idea has undergone considerable modification. The group has taken up many schemes ranging from farming and small-scale industries at one end to health and total education programmes at the other.

While it would be interesting to trace the history of development of the group, the more important thing is to learn from its failures. The failure is not only with respect to changing the socio-economic situation in the areas by conscientising and organising the poor, but in even being able to carry out simple exercises involving the creation of additional income and employment in the area. The dairy story is particularly instructive in this regard.

The group had an idea that dairying could be an important tool for socio-economic transformation. They motivated seven poor peasants and landless labourers to go in for the scheme. The local bank agreed to give a joint loan to all the seven farmers, and a trip was organised to Karnal for the purchase of crossbred cows. The farmers were accompanied by members of the group as well as a professional veterinary surgeon. The cows were purchased and the farmers came back with a lot of enthusiasm. They formed a small co-operative of their own, and delegated one of their members with the authority to sell the milk. In the initial stages the voluntary agency agreed to help them keep the accounts, etc.

The problems arose at many ends. One problem was fodder. Ordinary grass was just not good enough for these cows and with a deterioration in the quality of their feed, their milk output went down. The other problem which arose was that of the doctor who just did not consider these poor farmers important enough to visit.

On the demand end there was the problem of finding a market. Finally a restaurant owner in a town about 40 miles away agreed to buy the milk. This involved riding a bicycle for 7 km to the nearest railway station and then catching a train. The farmers could not get a milk-vendor's pass even though they sent an application up to the railway divisional headquarters. Only the threat of a dharna, which almost materialised, scared the railway authorities into handing over the desired pass.

Any hope that the co-operative loan would bring the seven farmers together and make them act in a united manner was rudely shattered. The petty rivalries, the difference in socio-economic status, the lack of

development of overall consciousness, all came in the way of group functioning. All these troubles intensified with a deterioration in the health of the cows due to poor feed. Within one year, all the farmers were pleading that the cows had become a millstone around their neck, and if the bank was willing to write off the loan, they would gladly give up their cows.

This experience taught the group many things, even if the farmers did not learn from it. They realised that dairying could at best be only part of a general thrust of increasing capitalisation in Indian agriculture. Efforts would have to be made to tie up all ends, from inputs such as feed and credit, to the final market source. Further, viability demands a certain minimum size of the operation which could then be linked up to a 'milk-run'. Finally money can rarely be made in the selling of milk. Rather one would have to go in for the production of processed milk products -- butter, ghee, cheese and cream.

Many such experiences regarding agriculture, appropriate technology, possibility of cottage and small-scale industry, even school education, has internalised the futility of the traditional development process in the mind of the group. They are now searching for alternative strategies to help them break out of this deadlock.

Both the cases discussed have had interesting repercussions. While the Jamkhed project has been successful with respect to its health aims, they had to go in for economic programmes to support their nutrition and community kitchen programmes. Various peculiarities permitted this success, the most important being that income earning opportunities of the poor could be raised without getting into fights over minimum wages or land. The other major factor for its success has been the continued inflow of outside funds to help sustain the programme. The Madhya Pradesh experience is a collection of failure stories which in themselves serve an important function in, on the other hand, dispelling illusions about the feasibility of traditional development process. Both the experiments started with one entry point -- health and education -- and travelled to other issues, evolving more complex models as they developed. While one, Jamkhed, is content with providing a model of an alternative health delivery system, the other is poised to go on to organisational tasks.

Organisations of Rural Poor

The Bhoomi Sena Movement : The Bhoomi Sena movement in Palghar (Maharashtra) started in 1970, primarily as a struggle of the Adivasis to recover land alienated from the small peasants to the Sawkars who were initially the local moneylenders. The movement which started more or less as a spontaneous reaction of the exploited and oppressed Adivasis on the social and economic plane, found an initial rallying point in the movement against land alienation and bonded labour. This initial success created an awareness that it was within the power of the tribals to change the socio-economic order of which they were a part. The organisation now has effective influence in over 80 villages of the district.

The Bhoomi Sena began its work in an area where already some work had been done by the Sarvodayis' led by Aba Karmakar. It was essentially the failure of the Sarvodayis' and the throwing out of Aba, which gave rise to the spontaneous solidarity expressed by the tribals. The process of consolidation of this spirit was helped by both indigenous as well as outsiders cadre.

While the early phases of the movement were concerned essentially with the implementation of laws regarding alienation of tribals from

ancestral land, minimum wages, abolition of bonded labour, etc. the organisation soon branched off into other activities. It must be realised that although the Bhoomi Sena movement has been engaged in the struggle for realising the legal rights of the Adivasis, its origin in spontaneous rebellion against injustice and its organisation into a political organ have themselves been outside the formal political and administrative framework. In this sense it was not the authorities who transferred power to the Bhoomi Sena to implement the law; rather it was the collective power of the exploited tribals which got crystallised in the formation of the Bhoomi Sena as an organ of people's power.⁵

There have been concerted attempts to eliminate the role of the consumption-loan linkage by setting up village level 'grain-golas'. There were moves to set up co-operatives to provide less expensive credit, handle marketing of products, etc. which reduced the area of operation of the trader. The moves have not been confined to the economic dimension alone. Having realised that there is a lull after each economic struggle through the Tarun and Mahila Mandals, social and cultural issues have been taken up. One good example is the handling of the marriage problem.

The Bhoomi Sena had just completed a successful struggle for the abolition of bonded labour. At the time for the marriage of one of these freed labourers, when the Sawkar was approached for a loan, he refused, stressing the point that the struggle had led to a separating of ways between him and his labourers. A meeting of the village people was then called and the issue was discussed. Various marriages, especially their expenditure patterns, were analysed. It was discovered that the major expenditure was on liquor and that this was consumed mainly by the Sawkar and the village Patel. With this realisation the tribals came to the conclusion that the old form of marriage was undesirable as they not only had to incur heavy debt to buy the liquor, but did not also get to drink most of it. Consequently it was decided to change the marriage form, and liquor was replaced by sherbet. A Brahmin friend acted as the priest and the entire village participated in the wedding with unusual gusto. Within a year, nine such weddings took place.

The organisation is also running schools in many villages, not as part of a literacy campaign but to use education as one of the inputs in the struggle. There is a talk of designing alternate health and legal systems. What is most refreshing about Bhoomi Sena is the decentralised organisation which through its various mandals ensures fantastic mass participation. A questioning ability has been inculcated in the masses from the very beginning and it would be difficult for internal authoritarianism to survive for long. The fluid organisational structure, the movement from a partial to a complex intervention strategy, the mass enthusiasm and participation generated, all in an organised form, mark out Bhoomi Sena as an organisation to watch.

The Jharkhand Movement : The kisan movement started in 1970 under the leadership of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. The area has had a history of militant tribal movement, but the movement of the seventies has various new facets.⁶

The struggle started with forcible harvesting and occupation of land which had been alienated from the tribals. The initial leadership was provided by the activities of the Dhanbad Colliery Workers Union led by A K Roy. All through, the attempt was to promote leadership from within the tribals themselves. By 1973, the movement had acquired a mass character and the fighting became more intense. Over time, other issues cropped up such as debt redemption, writing off of loans, etc. It took over four years of struggle for the tribals to recover their lands.

After the first bloody stage, when comparative stability had been

restored in the area, the problem of generation of additional surplus was taken up. Realising that individual farming might prove abortive, the tribals went in for co-operative farming. In 1975, in five villages, 125 acres of land were consolidated and co-operative farming was started. While the tribals put in a lot of effort to improve the land, bring in water etc, generous help was also made available from the Bihar government through the intervention of the Deputy Commissioner. Once production levels crossed subsistence levels, storage in 'grain-golas' was started to meet lean period requirements and to reduce the necessity of going to the moneylender. The remaining surplus was sold. Even here the attempt now is to reduce the role of the private trader by setting up a co-operative marketing agency run and controlled by the tribals.

There has been a strong emphasis upon highlighting the cultural past of the Santhals, their literary heritage, etc. This has proved remarkably efficient in generating self-confidence and pride amongst the tribals. Night schools for adult and child education have sprung up in almost all villages of the area. A fairly successful movement for reducing the consumption of liquor has taken place. These economic and social stirrings are now taking on a political dimension. In collaboration with the urban trade union movement and the Mahato (backward class) movement, there is a political demand for a separate Jharkhand state.

The Dhanbad movement is unique in the co-operation displayed between the working class and the peasantry, as well as in its ability to transcend a primarily destructive and agitative role to that of 'construction'. Similar examples can be found in the working Shankar Guha Niyogi's organisation in Madhya Pradesh, and in the Sharmik Sanghatana's work at Shahda, Dhulia.⁷ In all these movements there exists a potential for transcending the traditional efforts in an attempt to create a new social order.

Bureaucracy-Inspired Interventions

The Tappers' Co-operative Societies, Mahbubabad Taluq, Warangal

District, Andhra Pradesh : In Warangal district as in other places, a part of the excise rental revenue is obtained by auctioning palm and date trees for toddy tapping. The average revenue thus obtained is one rupee per month per tree. In Mahbubabad taluq, a powerful landlord who exerted control over nearly 100 villages used to win the tapping rights for the whole taluq by preventing anyone else from bidding against him. He won the rights for a very low payment of Rs 0.25 per month per tree and then sub-leased the right to professional tappers at the rate of Rs 0.75, making a clear profit of Rs. 0.50 per tree per month. This also meant a substantial revenue loss to the government. The landlord also exercised the right of demanding free services from other professionals in the area, such as washermen, cobblers, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. Anyone who opposed him was beaten up or killed.

In view of the revenue losses suffered, the government permitted the collector of the district a few years ago to form a Tappers' Co-operative Society (consisting of 100 tappers) in the taluq to break the monopolistic hold of this person. Over time five more societies were formed.

The collector may have initiated this process with a view to preventing revenue losses; but the implications of the formation of these co-operatives were quite different. While earlier the tappers had to rely upon the collector for effective protection as well as to look after the management of the societies, over time their expertise has grown and their fear has declined. New political alignments are taking place and the power of the landlord is being threatened.

Joint Farming Co-operative Societies, Nellore A similar experiment was conducted in Nellore where joint farming co-operative societies were set up under the district collector. The path to rural development, according to him, lay in the execution of land based schemes. The beneficiaries were drawn from the rock bottom of the village society; and the land that was distributed, the beneficiaries were informed was heritable, but not alienable. The allotment was designed in a manner that took into consideration the economics of consolidation and consequently the emergence of social solidarity. Allotment was followed by provision of modern inputs to permit scientific exploitation of land. This was a particularly difficult task as the rural poor had no reserves to offer as collateral against the loans they had to raise, and always had to face the wrath of the lower echelons of bureaucracy.

Schemes were designed so that each beneficiary would derive income from land, livestock and agricultural labour. The overall project has been fairly successful. Incomes of the poor have gone up, crop diversification has occurred, and interestingly enough wage labour as a phenomenon is fast disappearing. The subsidiary programmes have also yielded some benefit and the scheme of supply of draft animals has decreased the dependance upon the rural elite. In fact the poor share the plough-bullocks amongst themselves and lease them out to the rich when their work is over. The dairy scheme does not seem to be a major success as the area is not on a 'milk run', with milk chilling plants, etc.

The rural rich are understandably upset. The traditional patron-client relationship has weakened. Consequently assaults by the rich in terms of trying to break the co-operative have increased.

It must however be kept in mind that a lot of this success depended upon the integrity and involvement of the district collector. However, he realised that there might be trouble after he left the district and consequently attempts were made to institutionalise the personalised interventions.

Evolution of a Theory of Micro-Action

The three varieties of experiments discussed above cannot be categorised together. Qualitatively what has happened in Warangal is different from what has happened at Jamkhed, and both cannot be compared to Dhanbad. Yet each has its significance Jamkhed is interesting not only for what it has been able to achieve in terms of its health statistics or in the level of community participation that it involves, but also because it provides us some idea of what may be possible in an alternative situation. Similarly the Madhya Pradesh experience is important because it has dispelled all doubts about the traditional development strategy, at least in the mind of one group. In this sense groups which can internalise such conclusions cannot remain ambivalent for very long.

Palghar and Dhanbad are really case studies of spontaneity being canalised into organisation. There are many peculiarities about both. Bhoomi Sena took off on the work done by the Sarvodayis and, more importantly, by Godavari Parulekar. Dhanbad in any case has had a long history of struggle behind it. More importantly, both are tribal areas, and the stratifications are less deep than in non-tribal society. Consequently mobilisation and organisation becomes easier. The degree of cultural homogeneity is also an additional cementing factor. Similar strategies may not be so easily possible in the non-tribal areas. What has however to be appreciated is the learning inherent in the process. It is the emphasis not on the leadership but upon the everyday activity of the common man which mark these attempts as a departure from the routine.

Warangal and Nellore raise many issues. They were both 'social engineering' attempts, at least in the fact that the basic thinking was done by the elite bureaucracy. But all through there was a continuous attempt not to turn them into showpieces. In the sense the participation was an enthused result, more at Nellore than at Warangal. It is obvious that a 'gifted' co-operative is different from a cooperative born out of struggle. It might also not survive for very long. But they have qualitatively altered the situation in their respective areas.

We have tried to examine these six experiments involving different intervention agents, different entry points and leading to differing results. All the strategies seem to be based on an understanding of the nature of conflict and tension existing in the rural areas. Consequently a deliberate attempt has been made to avoid 'common interest' strategies which essentially involve 'betting on the strong'. There has also been an explicit attempt to avoid a major reason responsible for the failure of such past efforts -- a 'top-down' planning bias which treated the people as an inert mass to be operated upon. Consequently all these experiments revolved around a bottom-up, participating model of change. There seems to be a clear realisation of the necessity of mobilising and organising those sections of our population whom the present pattern of development has adversely affected, whether or not such mobilisation was actually attempted.

A note of caution should however be added here. While tension and conflict are one principal aspect of the rural reality, there are many factors which tend to diffuse this antagonism. For instance, between those who are the landed, the propertied and the privileged and the poorer peasantry, social relations have developed which are of a paternalistic nature. This reflects not only the economic binding of the poor to the rich, but also the legitimising of this relationship through an effective use of the superstructural mechanisms.

Having realised the necessity of intervention, a series of decisions have to be taken. The first decision has to be about the issues and groups around which the intervention has to be based. The issues would vary from area to area and would depend upon which specific group the intervention is involved with. Having grasped the nature of the contradictions, the second decision has to be about the entry point into the situation. While this would partly be defined by our target group focus, and the issues that confront them, the nature of the opposition that the move is likely to excite should also be taken into consideration. For instance, while the primary problem is economic, the initial entry point may as well be through health (Zaffarullah Chowdhary, Bangladesh), or education (Seva Mandir, Udaipur), because intervention in these fields is unlikely to generate immediate opposition. A group in eastern UP, where the problem of moneylending is very serious, first started with teaching the children of the poor and landless peasantry. Once gained acceptance and recognition, in both the area and the poorer population, they were able to take up issues of consumption loans, agricultural wages, rack renting, etc. The initial period gave them the required breathing time to firmly establish themselves in a primarily hostile environment.

The actual process of working will depend upon the creation of 'consciousness' which has to be turned into mass mobilisation, and the institutionalisation of the consciousness into peoples organisation (as in Dhulia, or Dhanbad etc). What has to be attempted is a movement from a recognition of the contradiction to their internalisation, the subjective awareness of 'friends' and 'enemies' being transformed into an organised mobilisation to protect the interests of the poor.



Secondly, it will also depend upon the pattern of organisation created. Most organisations have been run for the poor and not by the poor. These are attempts basically of social engineering, where an all-knowing elite serves the purpose of transferring enlightenment into the ignorant masses to galvanise them into 'developmental' efforts. The leadership is primarily in the hands of the urban/rural middle classes, who tend to impose an insensitive bureaucratic order upon the oppressed. Consequently a hiatus develops between the leaders and the cadres, and the cadres and the masses. This widening chasm leads to disaffectation and disorientation and completely reduces the effectiveness of the organisation, not only as a vehicle to reflect peoples aspirations and urges but in using the organisation as a tool to facilitate a movement towards the desired social order.

There has to be a move from a partial intervention concentrating on only the economic or the social aspects to one encompassing all the facets of the oppressed sections' lives. This is both an issue of the tactics of the struggle, as well as an issue of the principles of creating an alternative life style. (While reflections of these are seen even in the Jamkhed experiment, the strategy comes out clearly when we examine the multi-pronged tactics at Dhanbad or Palghar.) To even maintain the continuity of the initial action, the experiment has to deal with an increasingly complex situation.

Some generalisations can now be hazarded on the basis of the limited evidence offered.

- (1) Any total developmental exercise can be carried out only if the means of production i.e., land, cows, poultry, etc, are in the hands of the working poor.
- (2) The developmental exercise will have to devise a stoppage of the leakage of surplus arising out of the circulation process from the concerned area and population, in other words, an elimination of the money-lending and exploitative trading channels.
- (3) The model necessarily centres around tapping the creative ability of the human being through increasing his consciousness and assertiveness, canalising it through a movement into an organisation created by and controlled by the working poor to serve their own interests.
- (4) There has to be a move from the simple to the complex. Increasingly the organisation has to get involved with different facets of the human existence.
- (5) Such a movement has not only to attack the skewed asset distribution and the monopoly utilisation of scarce resources, but also has to create alternative power structures which can ensure the continuous participation and involvement of the rural poor in the decisions regarding their own future. For the process to evolve and the spiral to be sustained until it can reach a stage of providing a self-reliant base for development, continuous summing-up of experience from stage to stage, as each stage is unfolding, is required. This evaluation needs to be taken up by those involved, though external evaluation and guidance is not precluded. This is a part of the internal dynamics of the project, negating the theory that while someone does the planning from the outside, another group does the implementation, and still another group the evaluation. The entire exercise postulates that the target group itself should understand the experience -- internalise the process -- so that there is an improvement in the values that it sets for itself and motivation for further action.¹⁰

Limits to the Approach

While it is necessary to emphasise a bottom-up model of development, no specific micro movement, no matter how complex and all encompassing its nature, can hope by itself to reverse the trends of 'development' set into motion all these years. The linking up of the micro actions to a macro perspective is an essential task in the creation of a climate favourable for development.

There are many ways in which macro changes set into motion at the centre can have impact at what happens at the village level. The importance of changes in the planning apparatus and procedures, changes in the laws of the land, investment allocation into creation of social and economic infrastructure, income and employment generating opportunities, etc, should never be minimised. What the government should and should not do has often been recorded in the past.¹¹ What needs to be emphasised is that the favourable environmental impact of governmental action is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. The onus of action, however, lies essentially upon the manner of tackling issues at the local level.

At a more general level, no specific micro action can sustain a direction and nature substantially different from the overall objective conditions. A backward economic structure imposes its own constraints on the nature of the 'civil society' that it generates, and a very high degree of sophistication in democratic processes of running and controlling one's life is futile to expect. There are in-built tendencies towards bureaucratism and centralism inherent in the structure of a backward economy. Similarly, to expect a sustained high level of autonomous decision making by workers participating in backward production processes is also wrong. The tendency towards substitution of power is clearly evident, even within the communist movements we have the problem of mistaking the trade union for the working class, the party for the trade union, the central committee for the party, and the general secretary for the central committee. There is a steady erosion of power at all levels except at the very top. It is in this extremely constrained situation that the methodology for enriching and enlargening the scope of relevant micro actions has to be devised.

Instead of attempting to outline the total process of movement from the grassroots to the national level what can be attempted is a raising of certain issues. While the necessity of widening the scope and area of influence of such micro level organisation through both its own internal dynamics as also through establishing contacts and joint working with other such agencies at the regional level is all too obvious to bear repetition, it is more important to understand the in-built limitation of micro actions in themselves, and some steps which will be necessary to counter them.

The most obvious problems are those of size, replicability and resistance to outside pressure. Beyond a certain size in terms of area and numbers the development of a hierarchy and consequently a bureaucracy becomes inevitable. Micro actions are by their very nature extremely personalised and the leadership continuously interacts with the wider audience. However, when the dealing is with a large mass, sub-tenancies in leadership develop, and in a generally backward environment the tendency towards substitution of power, negating the intrinsic impulses under which the organisation started, will be very strong.

A micro movement and its structure normally develops in response to a very specific situation. When we have to deal with a series of widely differing circumstances, then such an organisational structure, which had evolved essentially not in response to a macro perspective, becomes adaptable only with great difficulty.

Most important however, is the problem of vulnerability. A micro movement, just because it is micro, can be very easily crushed. It is here that the necessity to either become large, or at least be linked up to a larger entity, becomes a question of sheer survival. This is more evident in the case of peasantry who in no way can survive the onslaughts of a hostile government without active co-operation and support of the urban working classes.

Finally all this has to be seen in the background of a country which is facing increasingly severe and recurrent crises and responds to them by an increased use of its repressive apparatus. One cannot indefinitely wait for many micro actions to start, enrich, combine and coalesce to provide a national alternative. A workable compromise, especially in view of the time dimension, is necessary with the existing macro organisations. Such a compromise, hopefully, will serve two purposes; on the one hand it will strengthen the different micro organisations and, on the other, qualitatively alter the existing macro organisations for the better. It is only through a combined effort at both levels that a positive process towards development can be set underway.

Conclusion

We have tried to examine different varieties of micro interventions. Some of them, while offering no model of development because of their partial nature, definitely point out to the possibility of alternate strategies in another socio-political setting. Actions like Jamkhed or SEWA in Ahmedabad, or the Marianad Fishermen's Co-operative near Trivandrum, or the bureaucratic innovations in Andhra, force us to reinterpret the value of 'constructive' activity in our programmes of social change. We must and the Bhoomi Sena example is a clear indication of this, attempt to seize the legal possibilities existing within the system. The social and cultural alternatives attempted help consolidate the economic struggles at a higher level of consciousness, so that future struggles can only take us further.

These experiments also force us to reinterpret the usefulness of conventional entry points as well as intervention agents. Just because we postulate a theory of the working class, it does not imply that initiative and creativity is blocked to others. The tasks of social change in India are too complex for any one group to feel that it is the sole arbitrator of the nation's destiny. We also learn to get out of the morass of thinking about only the industrial working class as our sole saviour and the trade union as the only organisational form available to us. More importantly, while the limits to micro actions as an alternate development strategy are fairly sharply defined, they help create a climate of change at one level and pressures for our macro organisations to reform at the other.

Most importantly, these experiments reassert the genius of the common man. All too often, we are so caught up with trying to provide complex answers to complex questions, that the art of living is lost to us. We just cannot believe or fathom out the extent of creativity and innovativeness which is present in a latent form. While we often mouth slogans like 'From the Masses to the Masses', the humanness that this practice demands is beyond us. We must learn to trust the common people and work alongside them if life is to be lived with the passion that it demands.

It must be realised that it is impossible to sustain a developmental process in the long run unless the people are organised to challenge the status quo. Mobilisation however can not be an end in itself, because what is desired is development which much more than being a 'state', is a 'process'. It would be wrong to dismiss strategies of health, or

education, or housing as unimportant just because they do not immediately lead to a structural transformation. It is really through processes like the ones described, no matter how partial they are, that social transformation becomes possible. Also it is experiments like these which create the basic learning and experience, on the basis of which alternatives under a new order can be attempted. Otherwise we tend to get locked up with the same experts, the same technology, and the same process, irrespective of who is in power.

An examination into these issues has become crucial at this stage with so much money and hope being invested in all forms of non-governmental organisations which are being promoted as the panacea to Indian ills, posing solutions to all problems from block level planning to adult education programmes.

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21 | Fishermens Cooperative in Marianad, Kerala

john kurien

The Trivandrum Social Service Society (TSSS) began helping the fishermen of Trivandrum District, Kerala by making boats and nets available through co-operatives on an understanding that they would repay it in instalments. But since the TSSS worked through the Church, which has always been considered as a charity organisation the question of repayment was not taken seriously. Moreover the structure of the TSSS was not adapted to the situation it sought to handle and the sum total of it all was that the schemes failed.

Schemes failed but not hope. Realising that its difficult to work in the existing villages where the accumulated problems were too massive to tackle, the TSSS decided to work with a few families in a selected place. If this new experiment was successful they planned to extend the work to the other fishing villages.

They selected the un inhabited coastal village Aalillathura (literally meaning - 'the shore without people') and purchased some 30 acres of land to create the village now called Marianad. The programme was started by constructing low-cost houses through a house-building co-operative society. To create the community, fishermen from 7 different villages who were willing to come and stay in Marianad were selected. There were initially 50 families. For the new settlers it was a difficult choice to make-to leave their native villages and their relatives and set foot on a tract of coastal area known for its ghost stories, poor fishing and desolation. They had nothing but the intangible strings of hope to cling on to. Inevitably the majority of them were fishermen who had nothing to lose by undertaking this risk. Invariably the poorest. Along with the new inhabitants also came a team of community workers who were to live with the people and learn from the people. They had nothing to give but the best of themselves as persons.

The initial approach was that of community building and community development based on self-help. Living with the people, the team was always at their disposal and a feeling of togetherness began to grow in spite of differences among the people because of their different places of origin. The only guiding factor for the team was to commence with the needs that the people felt and expressed, to involve the people as much as possible and to keep the methods of operation as simple and as open as possible. No elaborate schemes, no big buildings no expensive and sophisticated equipment.

In this way many programmes were initiated in the village. A public health programme, clubs for boys and girls, saving schemes, a nursery and creche and many other campaigns. The basic idea behind each programme was to initiate an informal educational process to initiate changes, to

build awareness and allow people to develop confidence in themselves. Hence much time was spent in trying to make the people understand what was going on, encourage their involvement and help them to take responsibility.

Namukku Vijayikanam (we must succeed)

After about 7 years of such work, the team began to realise that no amount of community building would be effective and truly liberating if the economic matrix which formed the infrastructure of the community was not radically reorganised. The fishermen are poor not because fishing is not lucrative. They are poor because they are being exploited and this exploitation has become so institutionalised that they do not see and realise it for themselves.

After much study and inquiry, it was realised that unless the ownership of land, credit, production, marketing and savings were linked and controlled by the fishermen they would not be able to get free from the clutches of the exploitative forces.

But the big question before the community workers was how they could make the community conscious of the exploitation that has become so much part of the system and accepted as the 'right order of things'?

Round about this time one great need always being expressed by the people was the need for a church in Marianad so that they can really consider this as their own village. Some members of the team of community workers were against this because they were convinced that though this was a 'need' expressed by the people it was not a priority. One community worker in the group thought differently. He was convinced that if till now everything was taken up according to the genuine needs of the people, then this initiative of the people to build a church, must also be taken up equally seriously. How this occasion can be used to achieve the real goal of bringing the people before the reality should be the task of the team and not prima facia rejection of the people's expression.

The people gathered and decided that they would build their church by collecting money for it as was the practice in their native village - a share of the daily fish catch (5%) which would be noted down and collected the next day by the man appointed to do the task.

The community worker used to spend a lot of time on the seashore seeing the catch the people brought back, the value for which it was sold to the merchants through the moneylender and from this was able to get a mental idea of the share that the church would get for that day. In the evenings the fishermen brought their share for the church funds. Invariably the actual amounts brought always varied from what was rightfully due when calculated on the basis of the value for which the fish was initially auctioned.

'Why this difference?' they were asked 'Is it that you are dishonest?' No, that could never be especially when it had to do with the affairs of their church. There were other reasons. Gradually at these evening meetings with the men all the reasons came out one by one:

'I'm indebted to the moneylender. He reduced the daily interest from the value of today's catch'

'The merchant who owed me Rs.27/- for yesterday's fish gave me only Rs.15/- saying that he incurred a heavy loss'.

'I had to pay the auctioneer for auctioning my fish. He wanted Rs.10/- immediately, failing which he said he'd never auction my fish again'.

The community worker talked to them about the possibility of co-operation in selling their fish appointing a man of their own who could auction all their fish and also collect the money from the merchants; the possibility of saving where each may save small amounts but keep it all together and thus help each other in time of need.

Three months of discussions that were centred around the collecting of money for the church passed away very soon. The people had collected about Rs.1,000/- and then the day of reckoning came.

After one such meeting the fishermen continued to argue and discuss among themselves and finally came to the conclusion that even if it was to build a church they had to first have control over the produce of their hard labour. Enough was enough and now they would take their destiny in their own hands-come what may. They had reached the crest of their emotion and enthusiasm. They decided to use the Rs.1,000/- as the initial working capital and wanted the community workers to sit with them to plan the details of the strategy for action and within a few days the campaign to free themselves from the moneylenders and sell their fish by themselves was started. The campaign had only one aim and it was expressed by the fishermen in two succinct words-'Namukku vijayakanam' (We must succeed).

'Struggle -- the prerequisite for true success

When the Co-operative was started it needed a small shed on the sea shore. The parish priest from the neighbouring village who was also coming to say Mass on Sundays in Marianad came to inaugurate the construction of the shed. Two or three weeks after the start of the Co-operative the priest did not turn up for the Mass. All the community was waiting in the community centre where Mass was being said since there was no church in Marianad. Later, on inquiry the priest said he did not come since he did not have the new books for the new liturgy prescribed for that Sunday. The next week also he did not turn up and gave another excuse. On the third week it was discovered that the moneylender who was on the church committee of the neighbouring parish from where the priest came had threatened the priest and told him not to go to say Mass in Marianad. However this the people did not understand since the priest himself was all support for the Co-operative in the planning stages.

The issue did not stop there. The moneylender succeeded in getting the support of the other parishiners of the six neighbouring villages to raise certain complaints against the Marianad fishermen regarding the method of fishing used by them. The fishermen of Marianad had introduced fishing with hook and line which was new to this coastal tract where the majority of the fishermen used only a beach net with which fish can be caught without going to sea. The people around were instigated saying that since the fishermen of Marianad went out into the sea to catch fish with the hook and line the original settlers of that coastal area suffered a fish famine.

It was therefore demanded that for three months of the year December to February - the fishermen of Marianad should not go hook fishing. This hard proposition was supported by the Panchayat, some officials of the Department of Fisheries, local politicians and parish priests.

After long hours of deliberation with the community workers the fishermen of Marianad accepted the proposition just to show the others

that they would stand united. During the first two weeks of this period of restriction on fishing the people of Marianad suffered a lot. However what they failed to see when fully involved they saw while temporarily detached from the routine of hard work to earn a day's living. During this difficult time the moneylender approached the people of Marianad and said the restriction would be lifted if they agreed to sell the fish through him. On hearing this the people knew who the real person behind the whole plot was and they refused to accept his suggestion or money.

By the end of the third week of the restriction the members of the Co-operative managed to convene another meeting in the Panchayat Office where the above mentioned leaders were present. Again all these leaders including the priests, wanted to continue the restriction as was agreed in the previous meeting. At this juncture one member of the Co-operative stood up and said that they could not live without working and that they had decided to break the restriction and go fishing from the next day onwards because they realised that this whole issue was a big hoax. The pandemonium caused by this bold statement of a 'solitary fisherman' was momentous. They came back from the meeting, reported their decision and informed everyone to prepare to go fishing the next morning. They lined up their catamarans on the beach prepared their hook and lines and also gathered all kinds of weapons to be used against anybody who might dare to stop them from implementing their decision.

It is more honourable for a fisherman to die fighting for his rights in the sea which is the source of his living, rather than starve to death on the land, was the rationale of that moment. Hearing about all the happenings and the determination, the opponents withdrew from the fight. From then on the Co-operative started to function again.

With the growth of the Co-operative many things began to change in the community. The fishermen realised that their catch meant money and so they began to bargain for good prices. They began to see the folly of the past and on the whole they began to know more, have more and participate more.

Today their Co-operative is beyond doubt the only fishermen's co-operative that is completely controlled by real fishermen and certainly the only village co-operative that undertakes to sell all the fish of its members.



22 | The Forest Cover "Chipko Movement" in North India

anupam mishra

A major environmental and ecological awakening, known as the 'Chipko' movement, has taken place in the Uttarakhand region of the Himalayas. Chipko is a Hindi term meaning 'cling', and refers to the technique of 'clinging to the trees' devised by the inhabitants of the Uttarakhand region to prevent felling of trees in the forest of their hills.

The genesis of 'Chipko' is an excellent example of how 'peaceful resistance' efforts at the grass roots level started by a few simple but dedicated, selfless village-workers can trigger off a full-fledged movement which ultimately assumes national and even international importance. It also demonstrates very clearly that the economic well-being of rival hill folk is intimately connected with the ecological preservation of its forests.

The beginnings of this movement can be traced back to 1962, when the government- as a result of the border war with China- decided to build a network of roads in this area. Until then, the only interest plainsfolk had in this area was for exploiting its forest wealth. Employment opportunities within the region were practically non-existent and the people were very poor. Most families sent their children to the cities in the plains to work as domestic servants or hotel waiters, and depended heavily on the remittances received from these meagre earnings for their sustenance.

The road building programme started in 1962 and opened up a new set of employment opportunities in the area. However, the contracts were invariably awarded to businessmen from the plains. These contractors recruited local hillfolk for jobs involving heavy labour, such as carrying rock and stones from one site to another.

But for jobs requiring even elementary skills, they always preferred to call in people from the plains- mainly from the cities. The state of affairs irked a few sensitive residents of the area, who decided to give up the jobs they were holding and instead devoted themselves to forming 'co-operative' of local labourers. Even though their formal education levels were low, the degree of social awareness and responsibility displayed by this group was extraordinary.

Prominent among them was Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who left his job as a ticket booking clerk in a private motor company. After overcoming the many initial hurdles always faced by such altruistic ventures, this co-operative managed to get a contract for the construction of a small patch of road. The job was executed at a per unit cost lower than what the other contractors were charging, and the income received by the labourers was considerably higher. The success of this venture was a shot in the

arm for Bhatt and the team, and they drew up more ambitious plans. They sent many labourers to the plains for acquiring different skills, and later started some small-scale industries utilizing local resources. In 1964, they began marketing the cooperative's products-furniture and tilling equipment-themselves, and for this purpose they set up an institution known as the 'Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh.' (Dasholi is the name of a block in the Chamoli district.)

By 1972-73, the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh had established itself pretty well, and it requested the forest department to allot it a few Ash trees in the area so that it could manufacture agricultural implements for the villagers. The reply of the forest department, manned by officials from the cities, was short, contemptuous and curt: the trees are not meant for small, local organisations. To drive home their point, they promptly allotted the trees in question to the Simon Company, a large sports goods manufacturer located in Allahabad.

The reaction among the residents of Dasholi to this decision was electrifying. For decades they had been passive onlookers to the spectacle of contractors from the plains coming to their area and felling trees. All these years they had regarded these trees as 'belonging' to the contractors, whom they treated with the special awe and respect that Indians have for foreigners-and hill folk have for the 'city sahibs'. But the efforts of Bhatt and company had brought about a silent transformation in their attitudes. Suddenly, they began to understand the situation in its true perspective: their own fate was inextricably linked with that of the trees.

Spontaneously, a movement to prevent Simon Company from felling the trees began. Every evening, residents of the area gathered together in the premises of the Swarajya Sangh and discussed ways and means of accomplishing this goal. The leaders were committed to a Gandhian approach, hence the options were limited to those that did not involve violence. Some suggested, 'burn the trees'; others said, 'let us cut them silently and carry them away' and many felt they should block the truck which was to haul away the fallen trees, but none of these seemed the right solution.

One evening, when some of the workers were in the midst of their discussions regarding various options, a most interesting coincidence took place-the representatives of the Simon Company arrived at the same premises looking for suitable lodgings! Actually, at that time, the Swarajya Sangh building was the only one in Gopeshwar which had 'guest room' facilities and so the Simon officials, not being aware of the nature of the meeting in progress, thought it best to approach them for accommodation. True to the Gandhian spirit they had imbibed, the Swarajya Sangh workers promptly opened the guest room to them and made them comfortable.

Immediately afterwards, however, they rushed to Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who was in the factory at the time. The arrival of the Simon officials meant that the felling of the trees was imminent, and the villagers knew that if they did not come up with a suitable action plan immediately it would soon be too late.

The mood at Bhatt's place was one of desperation. But, sometimes, the greatest of ideas owe their origin to desperation. Suddenly, Bhatt had the brainwave that gave the 'chipko' movement its name. He shouted, 'let us tell the Simon officials that when their men raise their axes up in the air for striking, they will find each of the tree trunks being hugged by one of us. Before a tree is felled, one of us will have to be felled.'

What followed was a most interesting spectacle. On April 24, 1973, as the workers of Simon Company went to fell the trees, long columns of hillfolk marched in a procession ahead of them, singing songs to the beat of drums. The songs had been taken from their own rich folk tradition, and the central theme of all these songs revolved around the importance of conservation. These songs were to become an inseparable part of the 'chipko' movement that originated on that day, and spread rapidly to other parts of the Uttarakhand region.

The processionists accomplished their purpose without having to hug a single tree, much less offer their lives for it. The Simon officials, upon finding that practically the entire population of the area—including women and children—had joined the procession, abandoned their plans. They asked their workers to withdraw and instead lodged a complaint with the forest department. Officials of the department tried to circumvent the problem by allotting the company a different set of trees in another valley. But as trees have to be 'marked' before any felling operations, the new allotments came to the notice of the Swarajya Sangh workers who sent their volunteers to the new area and again successfully prevented the felling. From that time on, volunteers from the Swarajya Sangh kept a constant vigil in the area. Finally, in December 1973, the 'permit' given to Simon Company lapsed without a single tree having been felled.

During the course of 1973, a realization of the ecological significance of their efforts slowly seeped into the outlook of the 'chipko' workers. The movement had been started primarily to safeguard the economic interests of the hill folk but, gradually, in spite of their lack of formal education, the workers began to discern the connection between deforestation and the furious floods that had ravaged the area in 1970. In that year, the Alaknanda river had risen sixty feet and caused widespread damage. 183 people had been killed, and many villages washed away. It slowly dawned on the 'chipko' enthusiasts that the real reason for this 'natural' tragedy was the unnatural and reckless way in which large areas of their forests had been denuded over the years, with the result that during heavy rainfall, water did not get soaked into mountains and this is what had led to landslides, silting and floods.

In 1974, the movement took on a distinct ecological image. The government had auctioned 2451 trees for felling in the Reni forests, some 120 kilometres from Gopeshwar. The 'chipko' workers decided to extend their campaign to that area. They toured the villages surrounding the Reni forests and explained to the inhabitants the long-term consequences of the government's decision. But this time the authorities played a clever ruse to prevent a repetition of what had happened to Simon Company. They announced that on March 26, 1974, certain payments—due to the villagers since 1962 as compensation for land acquired by the army—would be made at a town 100 km away, and, on that very day, after the villagers had left for the town, the contractor sent his workers to fell the trees.

No opposition was expected for only women folk were left in the village. But the role that women played that day in preserving the wealth of our forests will gladden the heart of any 'women's lib' enthusiasts. Upon realising what was happening, they formed themselves into contingents and moved into the forest to 'hug' the marked trees. They were led by an elderly, uneducated woman named Gaura Devi. Their mission was a success, and overnight Gaura Devi became the heroine of the entire area.

By now, 'chipko' had become a very popular movement in Uttarakhand, and the heroic role played by Gaura Devi and other women brought it to the attention of people outside the region. For a full month, there was

an intensive effort to build up pressure on the government to reverse its decision regarding the allotment of the trees of the Reni forests. Finally, bowing to popular pressure, the government appointed a committee of experts, headed by a professor of botany from Delhi, to look into the problem. After an extensive survey, the experts constituting the committee found themselves in full agreement with the contentions of the 'uneducated' chipko workers. As a result, in July 1977, the government banned the felling of trees in the catchment areas of six tributaries of the Alaknanda (a total of 1200 square kilometres) for a period of 10 years.

The 'chipko' movement has thus met its initial objectives. It continues today in a different form. The Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh has embarked upon a vigorous policy of afforestation, planting a large number of willows, oaks, firs and other trees. Its village-based, small-scale industries are also flourishing. Their workers have extended the 'save the trees' campaign to new areas in the district. The 1977 government order covered only one of the three catchment areas in the district. In 1977, the Swarajya Sangh managed to persuade the authorities to ban felling in the Mandakini region., and they are currently making efforts for a similar ban in the third catchment area, known as Pinder.

Meanwhile, the enthusiasm for 'chipko' has spread to other districts in the Uttarakhand region. Similar groups have started functioning in Hewal valley, Rani Chauri, and Badiyargarh in the Tehri and Almora districts. More recently, in January 1979, the fast undertaken by the Sarvodaya leader, Sunderlal Bahuguna, to save Uttarakhand's forests resulted in a moratorium on felling of green trees in all the eight hill districts of the U.P. The moratorium will continue till a satisfactory solution to problems of forest conservation can be found by mutual discussion between the Chief Minister of U.P. and the movement leaders; to be mediated by no less a person than Late Jaya Prakash Narayan.

Although the U.P. forests account for a small (6.49) per cent of the country's total forest wealth and in this the share of the forests in their eight hill districts will be smaller still, but their crucial significance stems from the fact that they form the catchment of some of India's major rivers such as the Ganga (Alaknanda, Bhagirathi), Jamuna, Ramganga, Dhaulī, Gouri, Kali, etc. Indeed, the health of these catchments will affect the entire plains region in northern India.

The Chipko movement has not only attracted national attention by championing the cause of forest preservation, it has also come up with some very practical and constructive suggestions for renewal of depleted forests. Its six-point charter could be applied to every forest region in the country.

1. All tree-felling in catchment and sensitive areas must be stopped, and the natural process of vegetation renewal should be helped by every possible means. The management of these forests should aim at generating topsoil, to conserve the water sources, to check the floods and to maintain the weather cycle.
2. The contractor system of logging which is mainly responsible for the ravaging of forests and the poverty of hill people, should be immediately outlawed and the forests should be worked by the labour co-operatives formed by the local people.
3. The local villagers should be helped in establishing small-scale and cottage industries based on the wide variety of forest-produce as raw material. For this, they should be provided the necessary technical know-how and adequate supply of raw materials.

4. Those who live close to the forests should be given job opportunities in the forest services and forest management.
5. The demand for forest-produce to meet daily necessities in villages situated close to the forest should be properly assessed and the forest rights of the villagers should be settled afresh.
6. The denuded land should be leased to the villagers for reafforestation and they should be encouraged to plant suitable vegetation on it which can meet their daily requirements of fuel, fodder, fruit, fibre and organic manure.

Although the Chipko workers had to resort to a struggle for saving trees, a sensible government could have protected valuable forests with just the stroke of a pen. On the other hand, even hundreds of governmental edicts cannot create a new forest where the land has lost the power to oblige. Reafforestation would require adequate research funds, an extensive net-work of nurseries and, above all, active cooperation from the villagers, without which the entire forest management machinery from the Chief Conservator to the forest guard cannot ensure success. However, they will cooperate only if due consideration is given to their genuine needs. Fuel-wood accounts for 57 per cent of the total forest-produce in the country: the remaining 43 per cent caters to various needs like railway sleepers, building and industrial wood, pulp and paper, etc.

Almost the entire effort and money invested in forest research is concentrated on their latter applications. Indifference to fuel-wood, however, will jeopardise the prospects of commercial wood as well in the long run. One more thing that needs to be said is that if the commercial wood, instead of being sent to the plains in the form of raw material, is partially processed in small local industries, the villager would realise the importance of commercial forests and would do everything to protect them. Numerous schools and colleges opened in the far flung forest regions during the last two decades have brought them into the mainstreams of national life. But the institutions have also created thousands of educated unemployed. Instead of letting them waste their youth in vain effort to seek employment in cities and industrial centres they should be absorbed in forest based industries in their regions. If this is not done in time, not only would the ecological problems remain unsolved, but new social problems would assume serious dimensions. What is more, both types of problems would aggravate each other.

A one-sided view of forests, be it ecological or commercial, can neither protect them nor make them profitable. The need of the hour is for a comprehensive perspective which is in harmony with the needs and potentials of the forest dwellers. An altogether rustic movement, Chipko has raised all these issues at the grassroot level and, at least in its limited area of influence, the movement has succeeded in generating popular concern for seeking solutions. Chipko's efforts need to be extended to a much larger canvas, so that the barren hills may bloom once again with lush forests, even though that may take time.

A Peasants' Movement in Maharashtra : Its Development and its Perspectives

maria mies

Class Struggle in Rural India

Recent years have seen an increase and intensification of peasant unrest in rural India. The background of this unrest is the deepening economic crisis which affects the peasant earlier and more brutally than the urban middle class. If news about the situation in the villages reaches the metropolitan centres, both in India and in the West, the public is usually given the impression that clashes between landlords and poor peasants and landless labourers are a result of natural and cultural factors: of rains that fail or that are too abundant, or of communal and caste rivalries. The Indian press reports agrarian unrest from the government's standpoint, reducing the rumblings of an ongoing class struggle in the countryside to a law and order problem.

If one makes a careful analysis of the many and fast increasing number of so-called "atrocities against Harijans(1) and Adivasis(2)" which have been reported by the press one cannot help but see that what is referred to as caste-struggle is nothing but a ruthless class struggle in disguise. The following examples illustrate this statement:

1. In January 1969, in the village of Kalvenmani in Tamil Nadu, 42 Harijans, old men, women and children, were driven into one huts and burnt there to death. The Madras High Court, four years later, acquitted all the 25 landlords who had been accused of this massacre for want of evidence. The judges were of the opinion that such rich and high caste gentlemen would not "walk bodily to the scene to set fire to the houses, unaided by any of their servants....."(3) What is the background of this mass murder of Harijans? In 1966 the paddy growing landlords of the Nagapattinam taluk(4) had founded a "Paddy Producers' Association" for the protection of their interests against
1. "Harijan" means "Children of God". By giving this euphemistic name to the Indian untouchables, Gandhi tried to abolish untouchability. In the meantime, however, the term Harijan is used in the same discriminatory manner as the old names for untouchables.
2. "Adivasis" is the Indian term for the aboriginal tribes who usually live in the hills or in jungle areas. They are not yet fully integrated into the Hindu system.
3. "Gentlemen Killers of Kilvenmani", Economic and Political Weekly, 26 May 1973, p.926.
4. "taluk" is the subdivision of a district.

the union of the landless labourers, the Red Flag Union. Most of the agricultural labourers are untouchables - Harijans. Whenever their union called for a strike, the Paddy Producers' Association sent labourers from other villages to break the strike. This had also happened in 1969. Under the leadership of the communist Red Flag Union the labourers had struck work for higher wages. When the landlords imported labour from outside a clash followed between the two groups and the landlords refused to give any work in future to the strikers unless they would pay a fine of Rupees 250 each and become members of the PPA. The labourers rejected these conditions. During the negotiations about this issue an agent of the landlords was killed. Thereupon the landlords organised a regular expedition of revenge. They came in police trucks with guns, sticks and axes and set fire to the labourers' huts. Eight of the Harijans who were involved in the killing of the landlords agent were sentenced to long and rigorous imprisonment, but all the landlords were acquitted.(5)

The pattern of the Kilvenmani incident is typical for innumerable similar cases of landlords' terrorism against Harijan and Adivasi agricultural labourers in other parts of the country.

2. On 4 July 1974, in Ramanapalle in the Cudappah district in Andhra Pradesh 500 caste Hindus, mostly landlords belonging to the Reddy caste, attacked a Harijan village with axes, swords, sticks and guns. They wounded 30 Harijans, including old people and pregnant women and burned 118 huts to ashes with all the belongings of the Harijans. As in Kilvenmani, these atrocities were the landlords' answer to the Harijan labourers demands for higher wages. The Harijans also demanded the right to cultivate a plot of follow land which the government had allotted them for distribution. Yet, when they had tried to occupy the land they were driven away by the landlords. The government officials and the police said that they were helpless against the Reddy landlords' contempt of the law. They were not able to protect the Harijans against the brutality of the Reddys. It must be added that the Harijans, as in Kilvenmani, had been organised under communist leadership.(6)

3. Another instance of the Reddy landlords' "class struggle from above" was reported in July 1974. Three hundred Reddy landlords tried to forcibly appropriate the land of the Sugalis, a hill tribe in eastern Andhra Pradesh. The Reddys claimed that they had been allotted the ownership of the land in an ex parte court judgement. The Advasis, however, had cultivated the land for many years. The Reddys appeared in buses with sticks and other weapons but the Sugalis were prepared and retaliated. In the clash 40 Sugalis, including women, and 27 Reddys were wounded. As in the Ramannapalle incident the police came too late, although they had been asked to protect the Adivasis. They claimed to be unable to prevent the Reddy's violence.(7)

The press reported about 12 such cases of landlord atrocities against Harijans and Adivasis in Andhra Pradesh alone. But it can be assumed that many such cases go unnoticed by the bourgeois mass media. To show that the pattern of this "class struggle from above" is not dependent on re-

5. "Gentlemen Killers....." op. cit.

6. Times of India: 5 August 1974, "Atrocities on Andhra Harijans! Some shocking cases."

7. The Deccan Chronicle, 13 August 1974 "Molestation of Sugali Women denied."

gional differences let us examine one more case-this time in the Punjab, in North West India.

4. ON 12 September 1974, four landless labourers were killed by the Jat landlords in Devbaath in the Punjab. The Jats are the dominant land-owning caste in the Punjab, as the Reddys and the Kammass are in Andhra Pradesh. They control the economic and political power in the state. From all Indian states, the Punjab has profited most by the "Green Revolution" and the Jats have become powerful rural capitalists.

The Harijan labourers of Devbaath had been organised by CPI activists. When they went on strike for higher wages the landlords declared a social boycott against them. On 12 September the Harijans had assembled under a tree to discuss how to react against this social boycott. All of a sudden a group of landlords arrived with guns. They asked one of the leaders to raise his arms, and shot him on the spot. The others tried to flee but three more persons were killed, among them one woman and a young boy. The police arrived on the scene after the shooting had gone on for 15 minutes. The leaders of the labourers' had asked them to confiscate the firearms of the Jats, but nothing had happened.(8)

All these clashes took place between high caste Hindus and Adivasis or Harijans. Yet, it is evident that they were not sparked off by caste issues but by economic and political issues. The landless labourers demand higher wages and land and they have begun to organize themselves to fight for these interests. The dominant rural class, however, uses its political, economic and cultural power, including direct violence, to keep the rural proletariat "in its place", as they say. In this class struggle the ruling class very skillfully uses caste discrimination, caste feelings, and the feudal dependence of the untouchable labourers on the landlord as weapons.

The fact that according to a report of the Home Ministry, every year about 200 Harijans are killed by caste Hindus, shows that the cases I have reported are not stray incidents. The same report admits that the number of such cases has increased significantly in recent years and that atrocities against Harijans are now exceeding the traditional communal troubles between Hindus and Muslims.(9)

The objective reasons for this intensification of class struggle in rural India are threefold: a) After Independence various attempts-albeit halfhearted ones-have been made to promote land reform by new land legislation.(10) b) The so-called "Green Revolution", the introduction of a new technology into agriculture, has opened new avenues of quick profits to the rich farmers. It has greatly enhanced their greed for fertile

8. "The Massacre of Devbaath", Economic & Political Weekly, 28 September 1974.

9. See: H.A. Gani: "Scheduled Castes and Communal Problems: A Statistical Study" in: Mainstream, New Delhi, 3 March 1974.

10. New Tenancy Acts were passed in most Indian states after Independence as land reform was one of the political objectives of the Independence Movement. In the sixties, Land Ceiling Acts were added in order to put a ceiling on the big holdings. The whole land legislation, however, was made in such a way that there were enough loopholes for the big landowners to prevent a decisive distribution of the land. Land reform was also effectively sabotaged by the government officials in the rural areas (see: How officials sabotage land reform", Economic & Political Weekly, 26 October 1974).

land at the same time pauperizing small peasants and landless labourers, due to farm mechanization and the buying up of small plots of poor peasants or the eviction of sharecroppers. c) The election promises of socialism and the end of poverty have given rise to new hopes of the rural poor. These hopes are now completely shattered. But the poor are no longer fooled by slogans of socialism as they can see that in spite of the deepening economic crises, in spite of shortages of the bare necessities of life for the people, in spite of rising prices, the rich are getting richer and richer.

It is against this background that the peasants' movement in West India which I have studied for the last two years must be seen.

The Shahada Movement

Historical Background

The Shahada Peasants' Movement derives its name from the taluka town Shahada in the Dhulia district in the north-western parts of Maharashtra. This movement started around January 1972 and has since gone through various stages.

Forty per cent of the population of Shahada and 75% of the neighbouring taluka Taloda are Adivasis, mostly Bhils. Fifty to sixty per cent of these Adivasis are landless labourers. The soil in this area is very fertile, most of it black soil which is suited for cotton, groundnut and sugar cultivation. Seventy to eighty per cent of the good land is in the hands of the Gujars, the dominant landowning caste which also monopolizes economic and political power in the district.(11)

The Gujars migrated to this area in the course of the 19th century from the neighbouring Gujrat. At that time the Dhulia district was almost entirely Bhil territory. In the course of one hundred years, the Gujars systematically expropriated and partly enslaved the Bhil tribals. They were helped in this process by the British colonial laws on land settlement and rent collection.

In West India, as in South India, the British made a settlement with the individual cultivator, the "ryot". According to this system a rate of rent was fixed to be collected from the ryot. And this rent was to be paid in cash. Thus the Adivasi cultivator was first introduced to the money economy. The rent was collected by the village headman, the "Patil" who became the de facto revenue collector.

The Gujars, originally a cultivators caste, settled in the Dhulia district after the establishment of British rule. Due to their caste status they became village Patils who also occupied the post of revenue collectors. In the beginning they had no money, but due to their role in the colonial administration they were able to increase their economic and political power. They used to raise higher rates of rents than fixed by the British and kept a proportion to themselves. Thus, in the course of time they were able to give loans to the Adivasi peasants who had to pay their rent in cash. When the Adivasis were unable to repay their debts, their land was taken by the Gujar Patils who in the course of the years became big landlords and moneylenders. The Adivasis were turned into share-croppers (gavandyas) and agricultural labourers who worked on a yearly contract basis (saldars). The saldars' relationship to the Gujars was one of serfdom, if not of slavery.

The process of expropriation of the adivasis and their subjection to the Gujars was greatly accelerated in the period between 1830 and 1880. Around 1830 the agricultural development of this area was greatly encouraged by the British government, which wanted to boost cotton produc-

tion. In Dhulia, experiments with Louisiana cotton were made. The whole cotton trade was centralized in Bombay and was in the hands of the British who exported the raw cotton to China. The commercialization of cotton, and later of sugarcane, made the construction of roads and railways necessary. The opening of the railroad to this part of Maharashtra in 1852 was the beginning of a period of hectic trade. The Gujars were the great profiteers of this development, besides the British, of course. They were landholders as well as traders and moneylenders and middlemen. They took to cotton and sugar cultivation on a large scale and used the Adivasis as labourers on their farms. The beginning of capitalist farming led to a tremendous pauperization of the Adivasis who were in no way protected against exploitation by the Gujars as the colonial laws were all made to protect the middlemen and their interests.(12)

Thus the Government of India in 1859 provided for the punishment of breaches of contracts of labourers and repayment of advances.(13) The Gujars used to make bonds with their Adivasi servants on a stamped paper acknowledging a loan of money for which the Adivasi had to work in the house or on the farm of the Gujar. When this "saldar" tried to leave his master's service the Gujar used to file a suit against him for breach of contract. The saldar, ignorant of the money value of his labour and afraid of imprisonment, gives in to the intimidation of the Gujar and goes on working. Thus the Gujars were able to bind the saldards to themselves as half slaves and keep them in bondage with the help of the colonial laws.(14) Similarly, the sharecroppers, the gavandyas, were brought into servitude. The Gujar would give his gavandya an advance to buy a pair of bullocks at the beginning of the year and a bond was drawn up with 25% interest. The gavandya would work on the fields and receive food from the Gujar. At the end of the year the Gujar took the crop without giving the gavandya a share, saying that his "partner" still had to pay back the advance for the bullocks.

This particular type of exploitation was not basically changed when in 1948 the old tenancy system of Maharashtra was abolished and replaced by the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act.(15)

It only changed its nature. The Act had the objective of preventing the alienation of Adivasi lands through non-Adivasis. Therefore a new system of legalization of landownership was introduced. The result of this act, however, was large scale eviction of sharecroppers, falsification of the village records by the Gujars, and other fraudulent circumventions of the law. According to S.D. Kulkarni, the following methods were being used by the Gujars to get possession of the Adivasi land: 1. "Moneylenders took possession of lands of adivasis who owed them debts. In many cases this took place under oral agreements. The lands so taken over were never returned. 2. Rich landlords took possession of adivasi lands on promise of exchange which never took place. 3. A number of moneylenders took adivasi lands on longterm lease with or without the Collector's consent. They get themselves registered as tenants and became owners under the Tenancy Acts. 4. Non-transferable adivasi inam

11. S.D. Kulkarni: "Over a Century of Tyranny" Economic & Political Weekly, 9 March, 1974, p.389.

12. *ibid.*

13. *ibid.*

14. *ibid.* p. 390.

15. S.D. Kulkarni: "Alienation of Adivasi Lands" Economic & Political Weekly, 31 August, 1974, p.1469.

lands were made transferable on payment of certain amount after independence. Non-Adivasis purchased these lands after they became transferable. 5. Adivasi lands were auctioned by cooperative credit societies because of non payment of dues. There were purchased by non-Adivasis. A number of these transactions took place under force and fraud." (17)

This systematic expropriation of the Adivasis reached a new climax around 1970-72 when, due to the incentives given by the "Green Revolution", the Gujars began to expand their sugarcane cultivation. As the Gujars also control the administration in the district they were able to channel the flow of government credits for co-operatives, the purchase of fertilizers, machines and high-yielding seed varieties into their own pockets. Thus they were able to build up a flourishing agro-industry in this area.

All sugar factories in the district are in the hands of the Gujars. The number of tractors in Shahada taluka which was zero in 1946, was 150 in 1967 and 300 in 1971. (18) In August 1974 I was told that it was by then 500, the highest number of tractors in a taluka in Maharashtra.

The Organisation of Resistance

It is interesting to note that the beginning of organised resistance on the part of the Adivasis against the Gujar's tyranny was not sparked off by a spontaneous rebellion against their economic exploitation but by their indignation about the harassment of Adivasi women by the Gujars. Harassment and rape of Harijan and Adivasi women is a common feature of the feudal relationship between landlords and agricultural labour. It seems that even today the appropriation of land follows the principle of patriarchal nomads who invade the lands of agriculturists: he who takes possession of the land takes possession of the women of the land. (19)

The man who later became the local leader of the Shahada movement, Ambar Singh Suratvanti, gave me the following account of the beginning of the movement. Ambar-Singh, an Adivasi himself, was a bhajan-singer (20) who was quite popular among the Adivasis. He was also secretary of the Sarvodaya office (21) in Shahada. One day his parents came to his office and reported that a small boy had stolen some cow-dung cakes from a rich farmer's house. The rich farmers then beat up the Adivasis and many left the village because they felt that the situation was unsafe. After this incident Ambar Singh met four girls from his village who said: "We are unsafe even in Shahada. The Gujars come and bind us to their horses and beat us." Ambar Singh then decided that he had to do something to protect his people against the Gujars' harassment.

He wrote a letter to the Deputy Superintendent of Police demanding that protection should be given to his people. The DSP wrote to the Sub-

16. *ibid.*, p.1469.

17. *ibid.*

18. P.B. "Organising the Landless" *Economic & Political Weekly*, 10 March 1973, p.501.

19. Most of the newspaper reports about "Atrocities against Harijans" mention that "huts are burnt, people are beaten and women are raped". This seems to be the stereotype pattern of clashes between the rural rich and the rural poor.

20. "bhajans" are popular devotional songs which are usually sung at big sessions during the night.

Inspector of Police and asked for a meeting to be arranged in Shahada. Ambar Singh was invited to the meeting. Ambar Singh, however, insisted that the DSP should go to his village and make an inquiry. After several negotiations Ambar Singh went to the office of the SP. The SP then produced a letter signed by the Adivasis that nothing had happened in their village, that everything was OK. Ambar Singh did not give up. He tried to contact all government officials in the district. He even met a minister and the Adivasis' MP (Congress) and asked them to come to his village and do something for the Adivasis. He offered to pay the bus fare for the MP. The MP, however, wanted to go in a jeep. But Ambar Singh said, he, a poor man, could not hire a jeep for him. So the MP refused to go to the village. Finally, Ambar Singh was fed up. He went to the office of the SP and insulted him and threatened to beat him down if he would not act immediately. Only then a meeting was arranged in the village, where the Adivasis were constantly being harassed. Eight Gujars were found guilty and expelled from the village. In the court case in Shahada, these people, however, were acquitted.

Then Ambar Singh understood that he could not fight the alliance of landlords, police and Congress politicians as long as he was alone. He began having meetings in the villages during his bhajan sessions and told the people about his experiences. The people also told him about their grievances. They then decided that they would build an office on government land in Shahada in order to have a centre where they could place their complaints. When they started carrying out their plans 61 huts in Ambar Singh's village were burnt down.

For one whole year Ambar Singh struggled with the legal machinery and the politicians to find justice for his people, but he failed in all his efforts.

This initial phase of individual resistance and futile legal pleading ended in May 1971, when due to the famine situation in Maharashtra, the Adivasis from the village Patilvadi, came to the biggest landlord in the village, to Jagannath Patil, to ask for grain. The Patil finally agreed to give them 4 kg each. On their way back the Adivasis were all of a sudden held up by policemen, accompanied by the Gujars, who accused them of having looted the Patil's granary. The Gujars had come with tractors and guns. The Gujars demanded that the police open fire on the Adivasis who had nothing to defend themselves with but some bows and arrows. When the police refused to do so the Gujars opened fire themselves. One Adivasi was shot dead and several were injured.

The Patilvadi incident was the beginning of the radicalization of the movement. The Adivasis understood that the Gujar-Adivasi contradiction could not be resolved by legal action. They saw the need for mass organisation, and militant mass action.

The next phase of the movement began on 30 January 1972, when a big peasants' conference, the "Bhu Mukti"-Liberation of the Land-Conference was held in Shahada. This conference had been convened by a united front of the Sarvodaya Office, the Bhil Adivasi Seva Mandal, the Landless

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21. The Sarvodaya Movement is the follow up of Gandhi's non-violent struggle with regard to land reform. Its prominent leader became Vinobha Bhave with the Bhoodan Movement. Sarvodayists are for a social revolution in the Indian countryside but they believe in strictly non-violent methods of struggle. They have set up centres among the most oppressed groups of the rural poor. Their Gandhian principles often lead them to blunt the edge of virtual class struggles.
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Agricultural Labourers and Poor Peasants Union under the Leadership of the Lal Nishan (Red Flag) Party, some independent young Marxists from Bombay, the Gram Swarajya Samiti and the editor of the Marathi journal Manoos.

This united front under the leadership of Ambar Singh founded the "Shramik Sangathna", the Organisation of the Landless Labourers and Poor Peasants. A programme of action was drafted the main points of which were:

1. Occupation of the lands which rightfully belong to the Adivasis.
2. Building up of organized pressure on the government to implement its Employment Guarantee Scheme. (22)
3. All Adivasi land transfers after 1947 to be cancelled.
4. All Adivasi debts to government institutions to be cancelled.
5. The government must fix a minimum wage for agricultural workers.

The landlords were not prepared for this five point programme of action and the organised strength of the peasants. They first tried to drive them away from the lands they had occupied. But when they saw that the Adivasis were helped by the young activists from the city who had come as full time political workers and stayed in the villages and when, due to the initiative of Manoos, the press in Bombay and Poona took up the issue of the Gujars' tyranny, they became more careful in their dealings with the Adivasis.

Therefore the Shramik Sangathna saw in the first months of the year 1972 a series of victories:

1. In a first phase the Shramik Sangathna had helped the Adivasis to get the land back which had been alienated due to fraudulent methods. The young activists got the transaction documents the illiterate peasants had signed with their thumb impression. They went to court with the Adivasis and activated them to fight for their rights. Thus about 4000 acres were recovered.
2. In March 1972 the Shramik Sangathna called all the poor peasants and landless labourers to boycott the elections for the State Assembly as elections had only so far benefited the ruling landlord moneylender class. As a result of this campaign only 30% of the people went to the elections whereas formerly the rate was 50-60%. Thirty per cent gave a blank vote thus expressing their contempt for the election farce.
3. On 1st March 1972 a peasants' rally took place in Shahada. It was attended by 15,000 peasants. The demands of the conference were:

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22. The Government of Maharashtra, is the only Indian state, that passed an Employment Guarantee Scheme, according to which everybody who demands work is entitled to get work. Yet this scheme has never been implemented. The government would need the support of the central government in New Delhi to finance this programme. This support, however, will never come, as then other states would also want subsidies for employment guarantees.
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- a. A rise in the saldars wages to 900 Rupees. (Formerly they got 300 Rupees per year.)
- b. Fixed working hours for saldars and one month leave.
- c. Fifty paise more for the day labourers.

To back these demands the saldars went on strike. They were followed also by the day labourers and the sharecroppers. The Gujarars had to give in to this organised pressure and to accept the demands.

4. In a next step the Shramik Sangathna demanded that the government forest land, on which less than 30 trees were to be found, should be distributed among the landless. The Minister of Forestry made an inspection of the land. He had to admit that there was hardly a single tree on the so-called forest land. Yet when the Adivasis began to cultivate this land with the help of the activists they were driven away by the police and 150 people were arrested. This was the first instance of a direct confrontation of the Adivasis with the government.

The Organisational Structure of the Movement

Within a year the Shramik Sangathna had been able to mobilize and organize large masses of poor peasants and landless labourers, mainly Adivasis. As it was evident that the main weaknesses of the peasants were their lack of organization and their fear of the landlords, the objective of the leaders of the movement was to build up a strong autonomous peasants' organisation and to strengthen the Adivasis' will for resistance.

On the village level, a youth committee, the Tarun Mandal, was set up. It is the basic political organisation of the Shramik Sangathna. Its function is to do political work, to plan and lead the agitations and other forms of struggle. About 40% of the members of the Tarun Mandals are girls and women.

The various categories of agricultural labourers, the day labourers, the saldars, the women, the children even, are organised in the Mazdoor Samities, the Workers' Associations. The Mazdoor Samities negotiate with the landlords about wages and working conditions. It is a characteristic of the political approach of the movement that each samiti negotiates for itself. The saldars, the women, and even the children, as I was told, lead their own negotiations. This principle of direct negotiation, without the help of "representatives", has greatly enhanced the political consciousness and militancy of the people. It can also be seen as an explanation for the fact that the Shramik Sangathna was able to recruit in a very short time a fair number of local cadres.

It was due to this efficient mass organisation and to the fast growing political consciousness of the people that the landless labourers and poor peasants were able to force the government to grant them more Famine Relief Works than in any other part of Maharashtra during the famine year 1973, when Maharashtra was hit by one of the worse droughts in her history. The Shramik Sangathna organized mass rallies, demonstrations, seminars on the Famine Legislation, and "gheraos" (23) of government officials. On

23. A "gherao" is a sort of siege. A government officer or a manager is being encircled in his house or office by a mass of people who do not allow him to leave till he has fulfilled their demands.

an average, some sort of agitation took place every week.

It was found that in all these movements and actions women played the most militant role. They led the demonstrations, invented and shouted militant slogans, sang revolutionary songs, and mobilized the masses. They went from hut to hut to agitate the men and persuade them of the necessity to join the Shramik Sangathna. In the negotiations with the landlords they proved to be more adamant than the men. The songs which were created during that period are indicators of the class consciousness of the people, particularly of the women.

Growing Repression

The more the Shahada Movement became radical and gained momentum, the more sympathisers in the city publicised events in the Dhulia district, and the more the organisation consolidated itself, the more the ruling class alliance of landlords-moneylenders, the administration and the police retaliated with indirect and, later on, direct repression.

Around September 1973 the activists discovered plans for a private army of the biggest landlord in the area, P.K. Patil. This army was planned to have an impressive hierarchy of officers, sergeants and commoners, and it was to be equipped with 100 horses, 120 guns and a jeep. The Marxist activists protested openly against the establishment of this private army and the government had to prohibit all further plans. The Gujars, however, were not intimidated by the government's decree. One month later they attacked 28 landless who had tried to occupy a piece of fallow land which had been sanctioned for distribution among the landless by the government. In the clash between the two groups, a number of the landless were injured, and one of the activists was badly wounded. This incident enraged the people so much that they were hardly kept in check by their leaders. They wanted to show the landlords that they were no longer ready to tolerate their brutality without defending themselves physically.

In February 1974 Ambar Singh, the popular leader of the Adivasis, died of kidney trouble. This was a great loss for the movement, but it did not affect the efficiency and the strength of the movement and of the Shramik Sangathna. In the course of the two years that the movement had lasted, the young Marxists had fully integrated themselves with the Adivasis. The more conservative elements had left the united front once it had radicalized itself. Ambar Singh himself, and some other Sarvodaya people, had carefully strengthened the left wing of the Sarvodaya, so that at the time of his death the Shramik Sangathna was able to accept the young Marxists as their leaders. These leaders saw that it was time to expand the movement to other talukas, particularly since the repression was growing. In February 1974 they began to set up a Tarun Mandal in Nandurbar taluka.

In the summer months of 1974 it became evident that the Gujars were no longer very impressed by the methods of non-violent mass agitation. Although they had verbally accepted the demands of the Sharmik Sangathna in May 1973 they had practically nowhere really implemented them so that at the beginning of the season the peasants had again to put them on the agenda of the peasants' conference in Prakasha Parishad in April 1974.

As before, this conference was attended by 10-15,000 peasants. A number of the opposition parties had also come to support the peasants' demands for the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act which the government had sanctioned several years ago. According to this act a saldar was supposed to get 1200 Rupees a year plus certain payments in kind for which he had to negotiate with the landlords. The demands of the conference were:

- a. Cancellation of all debts.
- b. 3.5 kg of grain as wages for a day labourer or its equivalent in money according to the actual prices.

The demands for payment in kind can be explained by the price rise which eats up the wages of the rural poor. This conference was followed by a wave of strikes between the 17th and 27th April. Whereas in 1973, the Gujars had at least verbally given in to the demands of the labourers, in 1974 they just laughed at the demands of the Shramik Sangathna and the Mazdoor Samities. On 27 April they declared at a meeting of the Association of Rich Peasants that they would no longer negotiate with the Mazdoor Samities. They would crush the Shramik Sangathna irrespective of whether its methods were nonviolent or not. One day later they sent a message to Kumar Siralkar, one of the leaders of the Shramik Sangathna, to invite him for a discussion. When Siralkar was on his way a man on a horse with red colour on his forehead stopped him. Siralkar fled into one of the Adivasis' huts, but then a regular "free-for-all" fight began during which 20 Gujars were wounded. The number of injured Adivasis was less. Finally the police arrived on the scene and arrested Kumar Siralkar, 138 Adivasis and 2 Gujars.

After this incident, the Gujars sent a delegation to the chief minister of Maharashtra, who is a big landlord and sugar baron himself, to demand the banning of the Shramik Sangathna as it inhibited production. They further demanded that the police force in the Dhulia district should be exchanged against new units which were not yet "contaminated" by interaction with the local people.

In the meantime the police forces have been doubled in the Shahada and Taloda talukas. They are further re-inforced by a unit of the armed Special Reserve Police for the forest areas.

It is not surprising that with this backing of the law and order forces the Gujars made no bones about rejecting the demands of the agricultural labourers. When they went on strike the Gujars said: You either work on our conditions or you leave. They imported labour from outside and the saldars and day labourers went without work. It was in the lean season before the monsoon and the labourers had no means to pressurize the Gujars. It became evident in this situation that in spite of a large scale mobilisation and organisation of the masses the dominant rural class could dictate the terms of action as there was no agitation in other parts of the state to support the struggle in Shahada.

The government adopted a two-faced policy. On the other hand it sided with the Adivasis and promised to look into their grievances, and to resolve the land problem, thus trying to co-opt the movement. At the same time it played into the hands of the Gujars as they are supporters of the ruling Congress Party.

The Home Minister of Maharashtra toured the Adivasi belt in the Dhulia district in Summer 1974. He promised to see to the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act. At the same time, however, units of the armed Special Reserve Police were sent to the forest areas in the same district to evict the Adivasi from the forest and which they had been cultivating for years. This so-called forest land consisted of huge tracts of fallow land, without trees or jungle produce, which had been lying idle for years. Adivasi peasants had started cultivating this land. The forest officers had taken money from them for not evicting them. These Adivasis had been organised into Kisan Sabhas (Peasant Leagues) by CPI (Marxist) activists. In summer 1974 the government decided that the forest land should be preserved for the planting of teak trees and it started a brutal and systematic eviction campaign against the "encroachers on the forest

land". It came in trucks, accompanied by units of the Special Reserve Police and asked the people to leave their huts. Then the huts were burnt down, and the Adivasis loaded on the trucks and dropped somewhere else, far away from their original villages.

All the left parties, including the Shramik Sangathna, formed a united action front. A procession was planned to the Collector's office in Dhulia with a charter of complaints. In Dhulia itself a Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights was set up by lawyers and other intellectuals to support the peasants' struggle. This was the first time that members of the middle class in the district town were drawn into the movement. So far it had only been supported by sympathisers in the big cities, such as Bombay and Poona.

The procession was an impressive demonstration of the peasants' solidarity and militancy. It lasted for four days and swelled to 20,000 people on its way. In Dhulia, the Collector promised to "look into the matter", when the processionists handed over their charter. But the only action he took was a further reinforcement of the Special Reserve Police. Shahada and Taloda were turned virtually into army and police camps. The leaders of the Shramik Sangathna understood well enough that this mobilisation of the law and order forces in the centres of the peasants movement was aimed at breaking the further radicalisation of the peasants. The new action front of the left parties tried to counter this growing and systematic repression of the government by an effort to coordinate the isolated struggles in other Adivasi areas in Maharashtra.(24) It became evident at this point in the development of the peasant movement that a new political orientation had become necessary, as the class enemy was no longer only the landlord class with its feudal means of repression. Now, in addition, the Adivasis were confronted with the government and all its military and police power. In August 1974 many observers of the movement said that the Shahada Movement had reached a turning point. It had practically exhausted all the possibilities a mass movement in a limited area can develop. Its demands had been verbally fulfilled but not implemented. It had not been able to gain the necessary power to make the landlords yield to their demands.

Assessment of the Movement

The Shahada Movement started in 1972, at a time when the repression of the Maoist Naxalite Movement had reached its high water mark. It is evident that the political line, the strategy and the tactics adopted in Shahada was an indirect criticism of the "annihilation line" of the Naxalites (25), who believed that the revolution could be sparked off in India by planned terrorism against the individual class enemy. One of the main points of criticism against the Naxalites is their neglect of mass mobilisation. In Shahada, therefore, the "mass line" was the guiding principle of action. It is not possible here to make a complete analysis of the movement and all its facets, but the evolution of some of its salient features may help to determine more clearly the possibilities and the limitations of the "mass line".

24. D. Ranadive & Chhaya Datar: "War against Adivasis in Maharashtra" in Clarity, 16 August, 1974.

25. According to Naxalite strategy and tactics, class struggle had to begin with the annihilation of the most powerful and repressive individual landlord in an area by a people's court. About the Naxalite Movement see; Mohan Ram's, Maoism in India, Delhi 1971.

The movement started with an individual, but later on became a mass rebellion against the manifestations of the main contradiction in Indian society, that between the semi-feudal land-owning class and the rural poor. This unorganised, spontaneous rebellion of the landless and the poor peasants, proved to be helpless against the landlords' power. The need for a strong organisation was felt. The Shramik Sangathna adopted the "mass line" i.e. the organisation of the masses through democratic struggle, using all means of non-violent agitation: strike, boycott, satyagraha, (26) gherao, processions, and bundhs. (27) This line proved to be successful in so far as large numbers of half-enslaved poor peasants and landless labourers were mobilized, politicized and organized for the first time. During the various stages of struggle the peasants acquired a clear understanding of the class character of their society, and even of the imperialist backing of the feudal and capitalist landlord-moneylender class and the government.

Due to their organised struggle, they were also able to wrench certain economic concessions from the ruling class. All this increased their self-confidence (undoubtedly a great gain, given their background of half-slave status), their militancy, and their will to fight.

The quick development of the movement is an indicator of the fact that so-called ignorant, "apathetic" peasants can be mobilized and politicized in a short time when they are organised and see a realistic chance to get out of their centuries old bondage and misery. In this learning process the "weaker section" of the rural society, poor peasant women, proved to be a driving force for the whole movement.

All these positive aspects of the movement cannot, however, wipe away the fact, that the organised masses proved to be powerless as soon as the ruling class as a whole reacted with systematic and direct repression to their demands. When the landlords saw that the peasants did not stop at certain symbolic actions but wanted land and that their organisation was taking on a more clearly Marxist character, they did not bother about the non-violent character of the movement but took to their traditional means of violent repression and terror. At this point it also became evident that the government, which to a certain extent had encouraged mass mobilisation and non-violent struggle, because it wanted to co-opt the movement.

Against this demonstration of combined economic, political and military power the "mass line" proved powerless. The Shramik Sangathna had not prepared the people to defend themselves and their gains against direct and ruthless repression. But the movement had no connection with a political party either, which could have directed and co-ordinated a revolutionary struggle: nor did the leaders see the need of building up a revolutionary party. This was partly due to the fact that the Marxists in the movement were on the one hand disillusioned with the two parliamentary communist parties, the Moscow-oriented CPI and the CPI(M), and on the other criticised the Maoist CPI(ML) because of its adventurism.

26. "satyagraha" means a calculated breach of rules and laws which provokes arrest and public discussion on the issue. This method was adopted by Gandhi and is often used as a means of political agitation.

27. "Bundh" is a method by which all business in a city, or even a state is brought to a standstill. All shops and offices close down, also schools and other institutions.

This was the situation in September 1974. It seemed that the movement had exhausted all the possibilities inherent in the "mass line". It was an open question whether it would be able to lead the class struggle in Maharashtra to a qualitatively new stage. To do so it would obviously be necessary, on the one hand, to give up the "pocket approach" and to link the movement with other struggles in the countryside and in the cities, and, on the other, to connect the struggle with the movements that were going on here and there in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. This however would clearly require a revolutionary party as a coordinating the directing organisation.

Postscript

The article on the Shahada Movement was written before the declaration of the Emergency in India on June 26, 1975. After this date, mass movements like the one described above have come to an end, at least for the near future. According to the Emergency regulations, all forms of democratic mass protests: strikes, demonstrations, gheroas, bundhs, mass rallies, etc., are prohibited. The Shahada Movement like most other open mass movements or organisations, was not prepared for a central attack like the promulgation of the Emergency; it had not built up an organisation which could have gone underground and function from there. Its leaders were immediately arrested and, though they were later released, partly withdrew from the area.

The press has specifically been warned not to report on anything going on in the Shahada area. The only information about a more lasting effect of the mobilisation and organisation of the Adivasis of the Dhulia district comes from the women's front. In May 1975, the Shramik Sangathna had sponsored a women's "shibir", a study camp. The discussions between the poor peasant women and the middle class women activists from the cities resulted in a plan to organise an All Maharashtra Women's Liberation Struggle Conference. This conference took place on October 17 in Poona and turned out to be a great success. It was attended by 700 women delegates, many of them from rural areas-Adivasi and Harijan poor peasant and agricultural labourer women-and by women workers from the city. Among them was a strong delegation of Shahada women.

The militancy and enthusiasm of the Shahada women also encouraged poor peasants and agricultural labourer women in other parts of Maharashtra. After a landless labourers' conference on 15 August 1975, the agricultural labourer women, in spite of the Emergency prohibitions, organised a strike in Sangamner taluka (Ahmednagar district) for the immediate implementation of the Minimum Wages Act, one of the points of the Government's 20-point program. The women demanded-and got-equal wages with the men (3-4 Rupees), and they also got work through the Employment Guarantee Scheme. More important than these economic gains, however, is the fact that the poor peasant and landless labourer women were not discouraged in their struggle by the Emergency.

Basic Service Delivery in "Underdeveloping" Countries: A View from Gonoshasthaya Kendra

dr. zafrullah chowdhury

Underdeveloping Nations

The phrase 'developing nations,' a somewhat more polite expression than the former 'underdeveloped nations,' is by far the more inaccurate term. It misdirects our deliberation, while masking the real problems and allowing them to escape solution. In reality, most so-called developing countries are underdeveloping.

Halfdan Mahler, the director general of WHO, stated that the average health care consumer was receiving less care in 1973 than he was receiving 25 years earlier, when WHO was created.(1)

V. Gunaratne, the director of the southeast asian office of WHO, the organization which is the custodian of world health programmes, laments thirty years after its inception that despite strenuous efforts over the years, both by governments and by WHO to strengthen health service, the basic health needs of the vast majority of the population in the developing countries remain far from being met in a satisfactory manner.

It was not war nor epidemics that brought on the higher death rate experienced in many countries in the seventies. It was hunger and the stress of malnutrition. Once fertile Haiti is producing less and less each year, and the nomads of the Sahelian countries, once capable of 'eking out an existence in the harshest of environments, have been forced into feeding camps to become ecological refugees.' Ethiopia, is travelling in the same sad path. "In a world without an adequate system of food reserves, rising world food prices translate into rising death rates among the poorest of the poor."(2)

In the Philippines, and certainly more so in other countries including Bangladesh, about 70% of the people die without seeing a doctor.(3)

Even today in Africa, women do 70% of the work in food production, 50% in animal husbandry, and 100% in food processing, household and child-rearing, yet are comparatively disregarded in government health, education, and development programmes. It is the same throughout the poor nations.(4)

Bangladesh : An Example Among Many

Indicators of a progressive underdevelopment, where 'the poor get poorer,' are frequent and decisive. Bangladesh, while possessing its own unique characteristics, is still typical in many ways of the underdeveloping nations. Remembering that the difficulties of Bangladesh are repeated in many places throughout the world, let us look briefly at this part of the sub-continent in terms of the deteriorating trend.

Education : Irrelevant and Expensive

In the field of education, a frequent, unquestioning imitation of Western fashion, often regarded as dogma, has created a system which is not only irrelevant to the population in general, but a distinct drain on the society's scarce resources. While the number of universities has increased, and the number of doctorates and master's degrees conferred grows larger, the rate of illiteracy becomes higher. In 1961 it stood at 78.9% and now in 1977 it is 82.4%. In the agricultural university, even in 1973, there were 72 PhD's and 130 Masters in Agriculture. But students remaining imprisoned for a five-year term within the college campus, contribute little to meeting the country's agricultural needs, even after graduation. And this, despite the fact that it takes 30 years of a farmer's labour to keep one student in the university for one year. (5)

A minimum of 10 years general and 4 years specialized training is required to create a nurse who will have the skills of writing reports, counting instruments, and making beds in an urban hospital, as well as having a psychological disability for doing any 'dirty jobs.'

The number of medical colleges and nursing institutions has increased while only 5% of the population have access to modern medical care, clean water and sanitation. (6)

In the annual government plan for 1976-77, the Bangladesh Government allotted a special grant over and above the regular budget for 445 million taka, to six universities. This amounts to approximately 24,000 students or 3% of the student population and .03% of the entire population. The grant was made at a time when the government was supposedly placing emphasis on rural development.

Cooperatives : A Form of Rural Exploitation

But education is not the only class-creating element in the society. Twenty percent of the population of Bangladesh owns 70% of the land. And 21.4% of the total cultivated land is enjoyed by absentee landowners. Three percent of the population are becoming landless every year, due in large part to the system of cooperatives and credit. Back in 1973-74, we observed that "when a land-owning family forms itself into a 'co-operative' it continues to enjoy its exclusive control of land and equipment, to monopolize capital, including government loans, and to exploit the small man...It is a novel form of rural capitalism in disguise. The small farmer and the agricultural labourers are still down-trodden; the landlords and money-lenders are still in control." (7) In the same year, 1974, the Bangladesh Planning Commission reported that the "...co-operative societies have turned into closed clubs of the kulaks...small farmers are entirely unrepresented in the leadership."

The situation today is substantially the same. Recently the government allotted 1,000 million takas in agricultural credit supposedly available to all. But the share-cropper must be guaranteed by the union Chairman, and, as 61% of this group belonged to the rich farmer class as far back as 1961, (8) the money-lenders would come from among their relations. There would be no advantage to a Chairman to certify a share-cropper for a government loan. And the share-croppers' economic situation would be apparent reason for refusing the letter of credit. Had the money been properly designated, it would have gone entirely in loans to the share-croppers.

Akhter Hameed Khan, reflecting on his experience of founding co-operatives in Bangladesh, remarks how "it was no easy job. The rural elite,

hand in glove with the urban elite, yielded great economic and political power. It was going to use that power to defend its privileged position. ...The time may come when working quietly around them will no longer be possible." (9)

Women

"The greatest single cause of the tragedy of Bangladesh is the place that has been allotted by history, society, and life itself to the women in the nation. Chained by culture, ignorance, fear, poverty, she is, in the words of a paramedic, 'not a wife or a woman, but a slave.' Hard and continuous labour with always the last portion of food; she cannot afford to fall sick. A slave unable to work is discarded, and this would be her fate as well. Divorced, not accepted by her parents to whom she would only be another mouth to feed, and a disgrace being separated from her husband, neither can she find employment to support herself. Now she can choose. As a beggar she may go to the town and there discard the last shred of any human dignity she may have had, or she can take the more attractive way of insecticide poisoning. (10)

"The pounding of a wooden pestle in a hollowed stump may have a romantic sound, but it is the sound of wasted human energy by those treated for many generations as second class citizens." (11)

The welfare of the child is inextricably and inseparably bound up with the welfare of the mother. Better nutrition and service delivery depends most on the advancement of women.

Poverty and Disease

Caught in the trap of poverty resulting in overpopulation, the landless and the poor; women and children, are an easy prey to the consequences of ill health and poor nutrition. According to the 1962-64 Nutrition Study of East Pakistan, 46% of the population of Bangladesh consume inadequate calories and 60% inadequate protein. Ninety-five percent of the pregnant women suffer from iron-deficiency-anaemia, while 50% of pre-school children based on height/weight standards, are malnourished. (11a) The situation has worsened since then.

Malnourishment increases susceptibility to diseases. So also disease contributes to malnourishment. In Bangladesh, the high mortality rate for measles; 190.6 per thousand (India's 95 per thousand, and Hong Kong's 4.7 per thousand) is because of malnourishment. (12)

Nutrition should not be treated simply as a 'line-item' in the budget. Malnourishment, associated with poverty, lack of participation, ignorance, and other characteristics of underdevelopment, is but one of many expressions of a deep defect in the society.

In Companyganj, Noakhali in southern Bangladesh, an area with a population of 120,000, a survey showed the death rates for the thana in reference to land holdings. The crude death rate for the landless is indicated as being markedly higher than the rest. (13)

<u>Acres of land per Family</u>	<u>Crude Death Rate</u>	<u>Age 1-4 Death Rate</u>
0	35.8	85.5
.01-.49	28.4	48.2
.50-2.99	21.5	49.1
3.00+	12.2	17.5

As in other underdeveloping countries, diarrhoeal diseases are the leading cause of death in Bangladesh. Intestinal parasite diseases, an

indirect cause of death, are rampant. 97% of the population are infested with helminths. In Sri Lanka it is 95% of the population, and in Venezuela, 93%. (14) Diarrhoeal diseases, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, tetanus, and tuberculosis, are the communicable diseases which dominate the mortality scene in Bangladesh. In recent years malaria did not figure in mortality. This year its morbidity is up to 26% in some areas. Even in 1972, smallpox was a killer.

Tetanus accounts for 22% of the infant mortality and over 35% of all neonatal deaths. In some parts of Bangladesh, tetanus accounts for over 43% of the neonatal deaths. (15) Maternal mortality is 20,000 per year accounting for 7.7 per thousand live births. In the Philippines the rate is 2.1 and in Thailand, 3.1 (16) children under one year of age account for 26%. (17) It is the poor and the children of the poor who bear, by far, the major share of the burden when it comes to illness. Yet 90% of the government spending on health goes to 6% of the people, and the wealthiest are found in that 6%, not the poorest. Medical students are still trained to meet the needs and stresses of the wealthy and are taught nothing of the so-called 'tropical diseases' more correctly termed, 'diseases of the poor.'

The Undelivered Services

As the health care system operates generally within the institution, it has become almost totally curative in nature. Distance from the institution is for the most part a serious impediment. The rural health centre, planned to serve 150,000 to 250,000 people reaches approximately 10 to 20,000. One Indian study showed that over 60% of the patients come from within a one-mile radius of the primary health centre. The proportion of the community availing itself of the services decreases 50% for every additional $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. The health care is ineffective in providing maternal child health, nutrition, immunisation, environmental sanitation, and water supply. (18)

Cholera or dehydrated diarrhoeal patients arriving at the health center within 3 hours of onset, run no risk of death. 10% fatality in cases of belated arrival of 3 to 6 hours can be expected, while the fatality rises to 30% in case of over six hours delay. (18a) Similar situations have been observed in some cases of delayed obstructed labour - eclampsia, and some abdominal surgical problems.

This situation has necessarily led the patients to regard the health centre more as a death and disease center, and in turn try to avoid it when at all possible.

In Bangladesh, as in many other countries, physical facilities do exist that could be utilized to bring the service closer to the people. Over 4000 union seed stores alone, presently lying idle, could be available to the rural populations for health care. (The union is an administrative district comprising of 15 to 20,000 people.) Instead we tend to build new and impressive buildings for the sake of donors, and perhaps to nourish our own feelings of accomplishment.

Disintegration of Services

The initial plans of the government in 1972 took an integrated approach to health and family planning, which 2 years later, due to pressure from foreign agencies, was weakened. A family planning ministry was created, and a division of 'services' has come about, playing havoc with the health care programme and with family planning results. The split of services resulted in a duplication of doctors, with 'family planning doctors' being paid 35% more than 'health ministry doctors', even though the latter had more work. In turn the family planning doc-

tors, often idle, do not have all the facilities to carry out certain family planning measures such as abortion. Programmes for population were introduced into the country with no real understanding of the village life, where the programme was to be incorporated. An artificial, vertical approach, which ignored maternal and child health, was pushed, and government incentive replaced education and motivation with the resultant corruption of those administering the 'giveaway' programme. A client follow-up of the 1969 East Pakistan vasectomy camp showed 64% exaggeration of the number of clients. A national IUD retention study in East Pakistan was the occasion for 34% of the clients admitting they had never used an IUD. (19)

Though the structure of services has been dis-integrated, it is nonetheless heavily centralized. As Higginbotham remarked of Indian service, 'it is a matter of orders down and reports up... morale at the bottom where the problems are, is low.' (20)

To solve the problems of disintegration and overcentralization, the experts appeared on the scene. Large number of foreign individuals and foreign agencies, still increasing, are a sure barometer of the under-developing position of the country. And they often only tend to complicate and misdirect an already difficult situation.

...it is apparent that we are dealing with multiple layers of institutional structures, almost all of them taking their origin from Western sources. The process started with a Western trained medical profession and continued with the sanitary inspectors originating in the British Empire, the malaria program established by WHO (with help from all of us), the rural health centers devised by Western public health experts, and most recently, the family planning programs. All of them were started with good intentions, all of them are firmly established bureaucracies... and together they make a terrible mess." (21)

Gonoshathaya Kendra : An Integrated Approach

"The health problem in our rural areas is a consequence of under-development and at the same time a cause for its perpetuation. Malnutrition, for example, is basically a problem, not for the physician, but for the agronomist, the teacher, and the community organizer." (22) A strictly medical approach cannot produce a healthy community; without the involvement of the community, anything that is produced will have a questionable value.

Originally the idea of a group of young Bengali doctors, the Bangladesh Hospital came into being during the war of liberation in 1971 when it served refugees and Mukti Bahini (liberation forces), on the Indian front. At the close of the war the hospital moved back to Bangladesh and into the rural area of Savar thana, an administrative unit of about 200,000 population, without a health centre, to face another problem of similar magnitude. Health service to the heavily populated rural areas is virtually non-existent, and it was to this task that the newly named Gonoshathaya Kendra, (English translation meaning People's Health Centre,) set its sights.

Background

Since the time of the British raj, the provision of health education and immunization programmes has been to appoint one sanitary inspector and a few health assistants per thana. As central government employees, they are given no supervision, and are poorly paid to operate the programme, which has no provision for community involvement. Whatever effort was put forth has been proven ineffective.

After coming to Savar in 1972, we initially held numerous meetings both with villagers and students in the area; trying to determine the best methods for bringing service to the people of the area. We came to envision a centre base, which would act as referral point for a number of sub-centres, which would be built on donated land with local labour when possible. Initially we recruited over 100 part-time volunteers from among the students, who would carry out the vaccination and health education programmes. Land was donated for the main centre at Savar, and the programme was underway.

During the meetings with the villagers, often dominated by the rich who were the more vocal members, a decision was taken to charge a flat fee for all families. This was a minimal 2 taka (US 15 cents). We projected that 10% of the population would be unable to pay even this, but felt that the rich would cover the expense for them. Later we realized that the decision of a minimal flat fee was mostly the rich member's doing, and we modified our policy in regard to sick room admittance, charging different rates to the poor and the rich. Admission fee for the rich is 10 taka and 5 for the poor. Fees per day are 1 taka for the poor and 2 taka for the rich.

From the beginning we made efforts to assure that Gonoshasthaya Kendra would be a People's Health Centre, rather than a "community death and disease centre." Preventive programmes were emphasized and integrated with other areas of life that had bearing on health, such as nutrition and agriculture and family planning.

The Paramedic : A Villager

In time we also discovered that the part-time volunteer workers would not be able to fulfill the demands the project work was making on them. We realized that a full-time, paid worker was needed.

It was at this time, 1973, that we developed the concept of paramedic, which has continued to evolve while retaining the basic characteristic of a worker who brings community development services to his own village....

From the beginning we realized that a majority of girls would be needed if we were at all to reach the women of the area. During the day, when the men are often not present in the bari (home), it would be nearly impossible for the male paramedics to gain entrance to the village home.

Also, the paramedics are drawn from the area which the project serves, thus they will be working in a familiar locality and communication will be at its best. They range in age from 17 to 25 years. Their training is carried out in the field where they take part in the delivery of services, carefully supervised and supported by the doctors. Some theoretical classes are given in the evenings. But the greatest strength of the paramedic is his or her closeness to the village, its unspoken needs, its wisdom, and its ways.

The paramedics are trained in the areas of health, education, nutrition, and hygiene, curative care at the centres and the clinics, immunization programmes, ante and post natal care, normal delivery, family planning, including motivation, delivery of services, and follow-up. Also, a part of their curriculum is basic pharmacology, record keeping and pathology needed for village work, such as examination of stool, urine, blood, and sputum. They do minor surgical procedures and are capable of performing female sterilizations independently. Their service and support extends out into the economic sphere as well, for they are trained to give advice in regard to agriculture and livestock, and to inject poultry. An understanding and sensitivity to the life of the village is seen in the

approach taken by the paramedics. They do not preach vitamin A capsules, but rather local green vegetable. They do not ask the mothers to go (usually some distance) to a tubewell for bathing. If the tubewell water is used for cooking and drinking, they are pleased for the present, realizing the imprudence of trying to get a busy mother to do the impossible. Knowing that latrines were not available to all, they educated the villagers to pass stool in one fixed spot. And, unlike the doctor who doled out 2 to 6 large piperazin tablets, (the child's dose for intestinal infestation with roundworm,) to be taken at home, the paramedic had the child take the required treatment in front of her. She is aware that a mother would be hesitant to give such a large dose of medicine to a child at one time.

The same was the case in the treatment of scabies. The paramedic knew a mother would not wash her child at night (before applying the scabies medicine) for fear of his catching cold, though this was the recommendation of the doctors. The paramedic, who sees the patient not only in the clinic, but in the home as well, washed the child in front of the mother, and in front of the other villagers who happened to gather, and then applied the medicine.

It was also the paramedics who questioned the wisdom of the ante natal clinics. Of the population being served in one sub centre area (15 to 20,000), there would be approximately 800 pregnancies in a year. Out of this number no more than 15 to 20% would be 'at risk' pregnancies, that is, women requiring special attention. Gathering all of the women and having them sit unnecessarily was neither an efficient use of their time nor of the clinic's. An alternative was to have the paramedics pay regular visits to these 'at risk' pregnant women most likely to have difficult labour or other pregnancy problems and give them the necessary instruction and observation. The result was no maternal death in the area.

Further effectiveness of the work of the paramedics in health education was seen when an evaluation team recently visited the area and found virtually no skin diseases, nor did they come across any diarrhoea. This did not mean that there is no longer any incidence of diarrhoea, rather now the mothers know how to mix the rehydration fluid, and will use it when diarrhoea occurs.

The following comparison of Gonoshasthaya Kendra's service area statistics, with those of the national average is also an indicator of the effective work of the paramedic.

<u>Gonoshasthaya Kendra</u>		<u>National Average</u>
Family size	5.9	6.4
Birth rate/	36/1,000	47/1,000
Death rate	12/1,000	17/1,000
Growth rate	2.4%	3%

(Sample survey in 18 villages, a population of 10,886)

The selection of the paramedics involves the villagers. This leads to a greater responsibility for the programme on both sides. Members of the community chosen to interview the new recruits are older villagers, but from among the poorer class.

In the delivery of the service, distance is always a factor. We sought to overcome it somewhat by the use of bicycles. Though quite acceptable for boys, girls on bicycles was a revolutionary step. It took little time to win over the villagers to the idea, however. Rather it was the more 'educated' and religious' leaders who balked at the

idea. But the idea prevailed and serves not only the aspect of transportation, but is a definite step forward in liberating women.

The Subcentre : A Community Centre

At communicating distance from the main or referral centre, the sub centre serves as a grass roots, community-centered base, which generally speaking, renders all those services available at the main center; curative medicine, pathology, minor surgery including tubal ligations and facilities for obstructed labour. The subcentre also serves as a storage place for poultry vaccine as well as general necessary drugs, and vaccine for immunization of the general population. It is a center for vital statistics, information records, the place of payment for services, and women's vocational training. A gathering place for the local community, it will eventually become a general educational resource. The structure was made by local craftsmen with local materials, and as it is not alien from their culture, villagers were inclined to give advice in regard to its design and construction. Community involvement was strengthened from the beginning.

The sub centre is meant to serve an area of 10 to 15 villages, with a population of 15 to 20,000. There would be an average of 3,000 population per paramedic at the sub centre, and one dai (traditional village midwife) per 1,000. Also, one female village worker, per 1,000 population. The village worker and the dai together would cover the following areas of activity: Deliveries, basic child care, family planning (service and follow-up), tubewell maintenance, taking children to school, livestock immunization, vocational training of women, food and seed processing and storage, preservation of surplus fruits and vegetables, and the planting of fast-growing trees for firewood and compost. Each sub-centre staff would also have one supervisor for the overall community programme.

The Insurance Scheme

From the early stages of the programme, February 1973, our insurance scheme was inaugurated in two unions and a few surrounding villages (population of 30,000), near to the main centre. Payment was two taka per month. Initially we had 60% acceptors, but the default rate was large, and the poor, unable to pay, tended to remain away from the clinic for fear of having to make the arrear payments. After meeting with the village headmen we had further discussion with the villagers and introduced a second form of payment which was an initial, 10 taka payment for enrollment fee, and then 2 taka per visit. This proves to be more acceptable, but the question of insurance still remains a problem. One we will have to continue to face with the villagers.

The funds that we are presently realizing from the 3,647 families enrolled in the first scheme and the 1,386 enrolled in the second, meet approximately 40% of our recurrent expenditures. In all, the community of over 100,000 population pays approximately 150,000 taka out of the 400,000 which is our total recurrent expenditure.

One factor we realize now is that the very poor which we originally believed to be only 10% of our service population, is in actuality closer to 20%. This group, no matter what variation the insurance scheme takes, will be unable to meet the payments. Yet it is basically for them that the centre exists.

On Doing Stupid Things

Sometimes we amaze ourselves at how long we, and others, take to notice the obvious. For instance our BCG programme which was done on a

limited scale in the first year due to unavailability of the drug, was also delayed from being done on a large scale basis for nearly another year. This was due to the fact that we did not have sufficient spirit lamps for sterilizing the needles. It finally came to our notice that every village home contained a lamp, though not as sophisticated in make, certainly as effective for our purpose.

UNICEF distributed vaccine (BCG) for the immunization programme and donated refrigerators to each of the rural clinics. The difficulty is that the refrigerators for the most part are used to store teacups or the like, as, due to some small technical disability, they are not working.

Bringing the vaccine to the villages presents a further problem. Even in working order, the refrigerator has its limitations. For carrying the vaccines out to the village, small flasks are necessary for storage.

170,000 hand-flush, WHO, water-seal latrines, calling for 2 gallons of water, are hardly practicable, even if the water is available. In Latin America they are often used as chicken coops or grain silos.(23)

Villagers also complain about the difficulty of bathing at a tube-well where one is forced to somehow pump water with one hand and manage to bathe simultaneously.

The government family planning programme, haunted and hounded by overseas groups, has been a painful example of doing nothing at great cost. Back in 1973 one rural development worker wrote from Faridpur, "After five years work in (Rajoir) thana there are 30 female clients and less than 100 male clients in a population of 144,000. But the family planning staff is about six at the thana, and two in each of 10 unions. There is a nice bungalow, and offices. But no output."(24)

Education : Relevant and Inexpensive

The degraded social position of the women in the villages was what first moved us into the field of education. We felt that if they could receive some training that would provide them with a marketable skill they would eventually gain a certain economic independence and resultantly, respect.

At the time when the family planning programme had its 'year of inundation', there were not enough pills to give regular supplies to our clients in Savar. One young woman, experiencing heavy bleeding as a result, was not able to carry on her regular work programme. It was harvest time, and her husband, refusing to understand her position, turned her out of the house. Going back to her parents in disgrace, she attempted to kill herself by taking poison. She was brought to our clinic, where we managed to save her life, but she cursed us for bringing her back to the cruel and heartless reality she had to face once again.

Jorina's position was somewhat the same. Her life being made intolerable by her husband's beatings, she finally left him. Separated from her husband she was regarded with disgrace by the villagers, and was an embarrassment to her parents. Remembering the other young woman who had been brought into our clinic, and wanting to save Jorina from a similar fate, we asked her to go to Dacca and train for jute handicrafts, which she would in turn teach to the other women. She accepted the opportunity, returned to give her classes, and through her new economic independence won the respect of the villagers and a new life for herself. Her husband, too, seeing her present state, asked her to return to him. Our jute handicraft classes were off to a good beginning.

The use of the sewing machine was next included, and as the number of women and girls attending the classes grew rapidly, a further programme was introduced. Classes in hygiene, nutrition, child health, family planning, and some literacy, were added, and the attendance continued to grow. One old man complained "you have brought our women out of the house," while during a morning 'discussion' one woman told us, "We have no honour in our homes. Here we have honour." It is by such comments that we can measure the steps of our effectiveness.

But handicrafts and sewing, offer a limited market. Our next step in the process of evolution was to inaugurate a machine and carpentry shop in which both young men and women from the villages would be trained to produce items of appropriate technology. From the main shop, a trainee would graduate and return to the village to establish a 'sub-station' or small scale shop carrying on the same type of work and being visited on a regular basis by the engineer from Gonoshasthaya Kendra. At present there are ten trainees, five boys and five girls. The group, unlike the paramedics who have at least 10 years formal schooling before coming, represent the poorer class of villagers. The girls appear to be the more serious and responsible workers, though the boys, too, exhibit real industry and talent. The myth of the woman's inferior physical strength is gradually dissolving. There is a tendency among the boys, to whom work in Dacca would be more available than to girls, to want to learn such specialized, -and saleable skills as welding, and then leave for a lucrative work in Dacca. Due to this we have concentrated more on training the girls in the specialized areas.

One of the questions put to us by the women during one of their own classes, was 'what about our children?' And this is the question we in turn asked ourselves.

Education should not instruct people to do impossible things. Nor to do useless things. It should be something which the villagers feel they have need of, something they know to be possible in their situation. Education then should be practically attached to the needs of the immediate environment. For the children of the very poor (landless) we began our 'functional school.'

Bangladesh government statistics indicate that 56% of the nation's school-age children do not attend school. Surveys show that only 14% of those attending continue after five years and only 1% go on to college or university studies. On completion of this 'higher education' students generally remain jobless. In the case of girls, 14% complete 5 years of schooling and boys 33% according to a survey conducted in Savar.(25)

It is assumed that the Bangladesh literacy rate is approximately 20%. In 1972 we did a survey of 28,736 people in the villages around Savar, which is located relatively near the city of Dacca. Using the ability to read a newspaper in the vernacular as a criteria for literacy, we found that 8.4% of the men and 1.2% of the women were literate. We also discovered that at least five years of schooling is necessary for a person to maintain this ability to read.

A further reason for the lack of attendance in the schools is that the teachers are often absent. This occurs because the school is controlled by the thana education officer, an employee of the central government, rather than by the village itself. We noticed a marked difference in the case of the madrasha, the religious school, where the teacher is paid by the local villagers. The community control is real, and the teachers are generally present, and teaching. Also as there is usually only one primary school per 4 to 5 villages, this means a fair distance for most to travel, and makes attendance for the young children more difficult. We noticed, perhaps because of this, that the school age

population (in the primary school) was generally from 7 to 15 years, while at the madrasa it was 5 to 12.

Neither do economic conditions make attendance at primary school an easy matter. Though free per se, books, notes and other hidden expenditures incline parents to employ their children in more gainful work. Initially the school at Gonoshasthaya Kendra is limited to an enrollment of 50, but will expand to 100 after the first year. Students accepted are between the ages of 4 to 10. As the paramedics have surveyed the villages and have access to them, a careful study was possible, and only the very poorest were chosen to attend. The site of the school is at the project land in Savar. A mud building has been erected, along with bamboo swings, slides, seesaws, etc. The areas of health/hygiene, physical education, carpentry, machine shop, agriculture, music, arts and crafts, will be included in the curriculum.

To overcome the difficulty of young children traveling the distance to school, an arrangement was made whereby a woman from the village brings those children coming to the school and remains at the center during the day, where she herself can participate in a training course. In the afternoon she is responsible for returning the children home.

It is hoped that the school will be an integrated part of life for the children, enriching the natural flow of their activities and not becoming something alien from their everyday needs.

Before noon, some of the children whose families own a cow leave for about an hour to bring the cow home. Failure to do this would result in the animal being put into the 'cow jail' and payment would be necessary to retrieve it. When harvest time comes the children will be needed to bring food to the men in the fields. They should not feel that they are merely 'absent' from a school that is unaware of their other duties. Rather the school should continually ask why their fathers do not have their own fields to cultivate.

Two Children at Gonoshasthaya Kendra

Our project community has extended to all ages. Mazedah an orphan of about 7 years, but looking more like four, approached us at a clinic we were holding in the northern part of the country. Amid a host of repulsive qualities she had one saving factor, -a delightful smile that somehow seemed even a bit too big for her small body. Her story was simple, tragic, but unfortunately far from being unique. Her father had died, and though her mother made gallant efforts to support her family, the odds stacked against her were too great. Mazedah related to us how one day her mother had eaten something, become sick, and died. The villagers washed her 'ma' with scented soap, wrapped her in a lovely white cloth, such as she had never worn in her life, and put her body into the river, the merciful grave of the landless. The river would not take Mazedah, -yet. She came back to Gonoshasthaya Kendra with us, and within a matter of weeks, her worm infested little body, at the cost of about 6 US cents, was cleared up. It did not take much food to make her body healthy again, though her ability to learn is at least temporarily impaired.

Korshed, also from our northern clinic, came to us after having been two days without food. His parents were living, but destitute. He too came back to Gonoshasthaya Kendra. Gradually Korshed told his story. "He had had five brothers and two sisters, -five of them had died in the last year, three of them in the last three months.... They had been living on sweet potato, which eventually gave out. And as the food stopped, the diarrhoea started. His father now saw that the children were passing fluid and would not allow them to take water. Without food and water the

symptoms appeared rapidly, -night blindness, swollen legs, and death. Each had met it in the identical manner. His father had realized that medicine might help, yet he also realized that 'free medicine' from the local hospital could only be gotten with money, which made it more unobtainable than food. So he took his dying children to the local priest, but this also proved a fruitless endeavour. Korshed realized that soon his sister would die. She had been afraid to come into the town to beg, an alternative that Korshed knew held his only hope. But his life in the town had not been that successful either.

His father he said had not always been poor. Once they had had land. til a flood came, destroyed the crop, and the land was mortgaged for food. Money-lenders are not easy people to deal with in any country. The Muslim money-lender, forbidden by Muslim code to take interest in cash, makes out twice as well by confiscating crops, and lands. Such was the case with Korshed's father who lost what he had to the 'Mahajan' (money-lender) and was silently swallowed up in that 41% "who have no rights to any harvest." (25)

Peasants and Graduates

The matter of money lending is a particularly critical one in Bangladesh. "During the last three months of the Bengali year, the landless and poor farmers of Bangladesh, find themselves, generally speaking, short of money for food and other necessities, and are forced to borrow. The money-lenders to whom they must necessarily turn, charge them exorbitant rates of interest. For each 100 takas they must return an interest of 30 to 40 kilograms of paddy in a 3 to 4 month period, an equivalent of 250% interest.

In regard to the cooperatives of the country, Rene Dumont has shown that 20% of the rich farmers borrow 70% of the cooperative's money, and that 80% of all defaulters are the rich farmers, whereas the poorest farmers always pay back the loan. We initiated the following small project to more clearly see the difficulties and how they might be met.

Sharecroppers and poor farmers living in villages surrounding the project, with which we had relatively close ties, were given loans of up to 200 taka each, during the difficult period when food is particularly scarce, at $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the regular interest rate. The interest is used for creating revolving capital. The reaction of the village money-lenders was not hard to predict.

A further attempt to assist the farmers of the area has been by experimenting in the line of agriculture on our project site.

In 1974, we made an attempt to find someone who could head our agricultural work. At the time, we wrote the following regarding our experience.

"As yet, we have failed even to find someone to take charge of the program. Our attempts to do so have taught us something about the education system of Bangladesh, but this is not all.

"We advertised in several newspapers for an experienced, practical man to supervise farming work at our centre. 40 applicants arrived for interview. All but two were agriculture graduates (one with a double first class), and four had had training abroad. Instead of a simple interview, we had a practical exam, followed by a written test, and finally a viva-voce.

"In the practical exam, the candidates were asked to plant a coconut seedling and prepare a vegetable seed bed. Almost all were unsure

of which tools they should use. Some made holes far too big or too shallow for the seed coconuts. Then they had to identify a number of samples of seeds, fertilizer and insecticide. Although, with the exception of soyabean, all the items were in common use in Bangladesh (any 'uneducated' farmer would have got full marks), none of our candidates scored more than 65%. Not one of them could recognize the common insecticide Malathion. In the written test, the applicants were asked to say what was needed to improve agriculture in Bangladesh. Remembering what they had been taught in college, all gave the stock answer: mechanization. But when, in the viva examination, they were asked about particular machines, it came to light that only one of them had ever driven a tractor; none could repair one; some could not distinguish between a tractor and a power tiller; few had seen more than a couple of deep tubewells in their life; none had any clear ideas regarding servicing and fuel supply for machines in rural areas, or about the cost-effectiveness of these machines in comparison with traditional methods.

"We appointed the man who seemed least remote from the realities of farming. He left us after a few weeks, saying he couldn't stand working such long hours outside in the sun." (26)

Life and Death and Water, in Bangladesh

They have no king, the rivers of Bangladesh. At whim they rise and fall, and carry the fate of eighty million people in their course. Destruction, drought, dehydrated bodies, disease in a myriad of forms, - green fields, ponds, fish, fertile soil, - water, the first authority in the land to whom poor and rich alike make their appeal. Burnt or flooded, the lands seem to know little moderation. And for want of water, or because of flood, for long periods in each year they lie idle, yielding nothing.

Bangladesh has a farm labour force of approximately 19 million men. Now, with only 21.75 million acres being cultivated, 12 million are employed and unemployment is 36%. However, if land was used to its maximum advantage, rather than only producing the 1.3 crops per year as now (27), there would be a shortage of labour. 67% of the land in Bangladesh requires irrigation, yet indiscriminate use of deep tubewells often hinders a problem the wells could go far in solving. One deep tubewell should irrigate an area of at least 100 acres, yet there are numerous instances where 4 or 5 such wells are installed within a mile radius. Often this results in a too rapid use of the ground water and in local handpump wells going dry.

UNICEF, too, has approached to pay homage to the problem of water, and admirably put its efforts into supplying handpump tubewells. Initially this was done without any charge to the community. However, when given free, the opportunity for manipulation was facilitated.

Generally the pump was situated close to, or within the compound of the wealthy man, the man with power and influence, and such a site was hardly appropriate for the community as a whole. The pump was 'his' until the inevitable day when it joined the 50,000 (27a) pumps of the country, and became 'inoperable' usually for some slight technical reason, and often only a few months after installation. When broken, the government's true ownership of the pump was quickly recognized.

UNICEF's aim has been to supply one pump for every 200 people. Our suggestion was to make an initial payment of 25 paisa (US 4 cents) for each person using the pump. This would ensure it being placed in a position advantageous to all members of the village. The village schoolmaster, who could be compared to a local policeman, is now hired to collect statistics for the sanitary inspector, and is paid

about 30 taka per month. This could be supplemented with another 30 taka, the chokedar could be given some instruction, and he and his wife could be placed in charge of the pump, maintaining it in working order, 'surveying' to determine who was not using the pump, and 'educating' in order that the pump would be given maximum use by the majority of the people. His duties would extend to the use of latrines also, that is, sanitation in general.

UNICEF did alter its original scheme, and decided after three years to make a charge for the pumps, -250 taka for each pump installed, with no further payment required. Any one individual could make this payment of 250 taka. Now the rich man could establish his full right over the water.

Not installation alone, but real availability of water and latrines for general use will contribute to the better health of the community, cutting down on intestinal and diarrhoeal diseases, and skin conditions. Dr. Mujibur Rahman, acting director of the Cholera Research Laboratory in Dacca reported that a study had shown the incidence of disease is decreased, by the provision of plenty of water, irrespective of the quality. And an uncared for latrine has no appreciable effect on community health. The sophistication, or difficulty of construction is not the determining factor of effectiveness. Rather a simple construction, that can be cared for is necessary, and is convenient for use.

There are 0.63 million acres of derelict ponds and tanks in Bangladesh. If these were excavated and made fit for pisciculture, the process would provide work for four million people for five years. If 75% of the tanks were productively used, they would provide 0.3 million tons of fish in one year, and the rain water caught in them would irrigate 0.2 million acres of HYV rice (1.2 million tons), 0.1 million acres of wheat (3/4 million tons), and 0.1 million acres of green leafy vegetables (10-15 million tons) in a year period. This would be a total of 15 million tons of food. (27b) The food produced last year, the Bengali year 1383 (The 12 month period beginning April 1976) totalled only 19.4 million tons.

Family Planning

Even as we first undertook the project work we became aware that a demand for family planning services existed in the villages. The source of supply was lacking. And so, from the beginning of our programme we began offering family planning service, but always within an integrated programme. Without real efforts at assuring parents that their young children would reach adulthood, we felt, we could not deny them the right to sons and daughters of their own. The programme therefore has placed efforts into providing the needed health care, educating parents regarding birth control methods and family planning in order to properly motivate them, and, once the method was chosen, to carefully follow up each client with house to house visits on a regular basis.

The traditional birth attendant, or 'dai', has also been successfully incorporated into our programme. Remaining in the village, she works on a part time basis, distributing pills, checking for side-effects, assisting where possible, and referring to the centre or sub-centre where possible, and referring to the centre or sub-centre where needed. She is also taught to spot pre-eclamptic patients and other possible labour and birth difficulties, and to instruct the mothers in regard to child care. Because she is village based, her drop-out rate in regard to family planning acceptors, is lower than that of the paramedic.

Since the beginning of the programme in 1972, we have noticed a steady pattern of clients moving toward a more permanent method of contraception, once family planning has been accepted. In 1974 we began to offer female sterilization performed by the paramedics, and found that a relatively large demand existed for this method. The sterilizations are performed under local anaesthesia, both at sub-centres and the main centre. Paramedics, having been trained to perform these operations, have proven themselves to be quite skilled. The villagers prefer the female paramedic to the male physician, -and it has been noted that the infection rate for the paramedics is lower than that of the doctors. The reason for this may be that the doctor is generally an occasional operator, and there is doubtless a tendency for him to assume the task of the more difficult cases for himself. The paramedic, too, may be more prone to pass over to the doctor what might promise to be a more complicated operation.

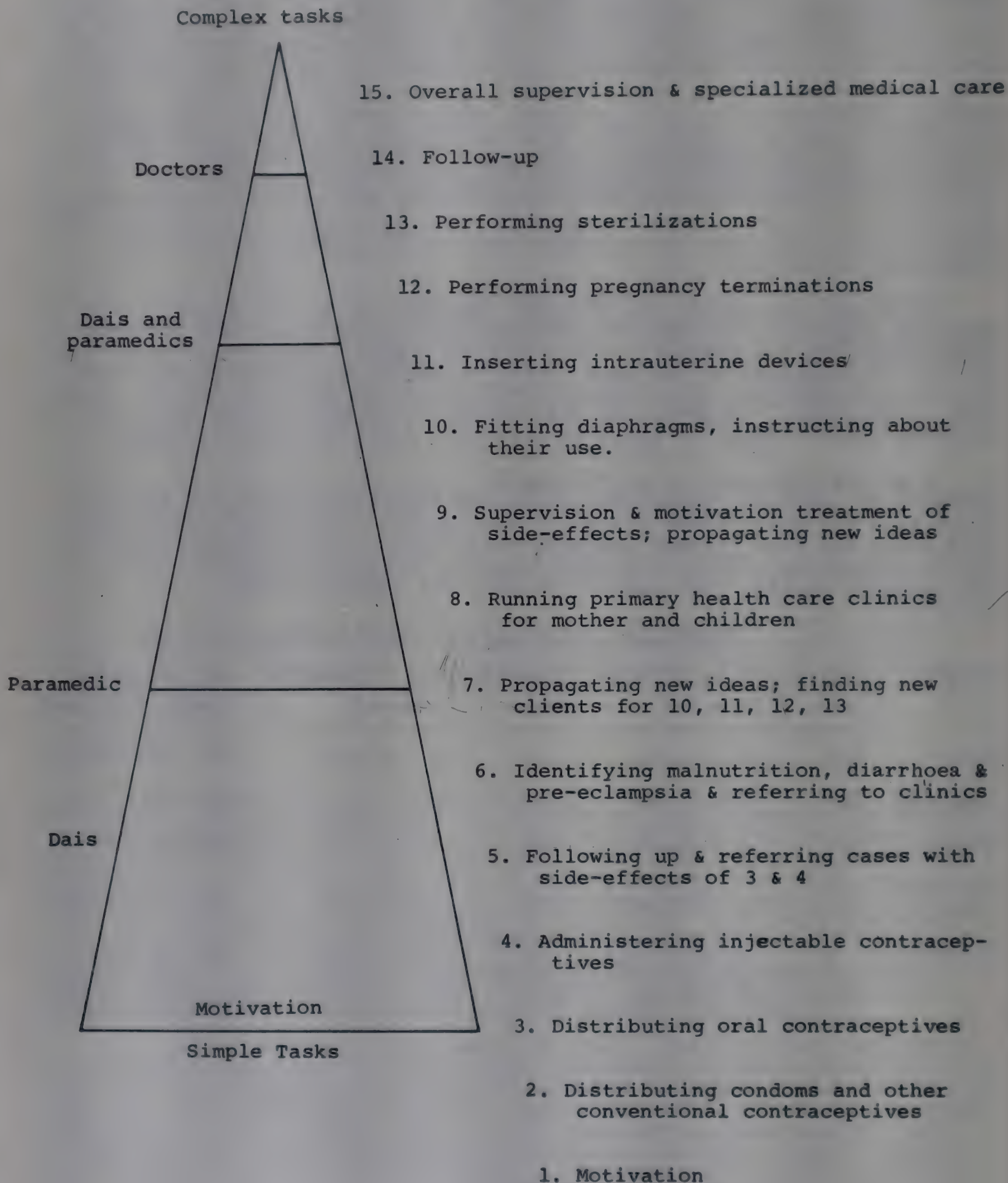
Menstrual regulation and abortion are offered at the clinic. More advanced stages of abortion are performed by the doctors. The government stand regarding the legality of abortion is somewhat ambiguous, thus there is still a hesitancy on the part of the villagers to come forward. However, a good many do, as no government facility is provided for the operation. The number of women who are submitting to the village abortions is quite large, though it would be difficult to obtain exact figures.

A survey conducted in Bangladesh in regard to attitudes toward legalization of abortion, found that, with the exception of engineers, physicians were the most conservative in this regard. The group interviewed were among the more 'highly qualified and senior professionals', and 62% of the physicians opposed the legalizing of abortion. Being far from the village reality, they cannot, or will not accept it. (28)

Comparative Infection Rate After Tubal Ligation

Centre	<u>Operations by doctors</u>		<u>Operations by Paramedics</u>		<u>All operations</u>	
	Total/	Infected	Total /	Infected	Total/	Infected
Savar	152	13 - 8.55%	395	19 - 4.81%	547	32 - 5.85%
Jamalpur	149	7 - 4.69%	1286	58 - 4.51%	1435	65 - 4.52%
Sherpur	151	6 - 3.90%	457	17 - 3.71%	608	23 - 3.71%
Sarisha-bari	13	1 - 7.69%	59	10 - 16.94%	72	11 - 15.27%
Sribordi	9	1 - 11.11%	71	7 - 9.85%	80	8 - 10%
	474	28 - 5.90%	2268	111 - 4.87%	2742	139 - 5.06%

ROLE OF "DAIS" (MIDWIVES) AND PARAMEDICS IN FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS



Family Planning tasks performed by doctors, paramedics and dais range from simple to complex. Doctor acts as team leader and trainer. Modification from Population Reports, Series J, No.6, September, 1975.

ANNEXURECost of Basic Services Delivery (Mainly Health and Family Planning) For The Bengali Year 1382 (April 1975 - April 1976)

----- provisional accounting -

Income Through Community InvolvementExpenditures

	<u>taka</u>		
1. Health Insurance and Clinic Fees	112,067/-	1. Salary	51%
2. Payment for Family Planning Services	10,440/-	a) doctors 56,779/-	16%
3. Payment for Pathological Services	7,346/-	b) paramedics 73,743/-	21%
4. Subscription for In-Patient Services	18,394/-	c) office and other staff 32,027/-	9%
5. Payment for Operations	3,947/-	d) other village workers 19,150/-	5%
6. Local Donations and Other Miscellaneous Income	15,553/-		
	<u>167,747/-</u>		
	=====		
		181,699/-	181,699/-
		2. Stationary and Printing	21,170/-
		3. Transport including fuel and maintenance	20,281/-
		4. Postage and telegram	1,064/-
		5. Electricity and lighting fuel	6,403/-
		6. Maintenance of equipment and miscellaneous expenditure	7,621/-
		**7. Drugs and reagents	120,473/-
			<u>358,711/-</u>
			=====

(44% of the expenditure)

** Cost of vaccines and family planning materials are not included in this amount.

Another Reality

Health education alone can only go so far. You cannot teach about good nutrition, (except for breast feeding) when food is not available. It is merely another form of inappropriate education. 'Why are you telling me to do something, when I know it is impossible?' Face to face with the village we came to realize more and more what is possible and what is not.

Nizam was 25 years old. He had been with the project as a paramedic since its inception, and when a permanent sub-centre was to be setup at Shimulia he was the one arranging the final details of the land. He knew the coming of the centre to Shimulia would threaten the fraudulent practices of a good many people, including illegal possession of government lands, smuggling, and selling health centre drugs. Among those involved in the illegal activities was the only qualified physician in the area, who was making a handsome profit by overcharging patients. Nizam did not realize just how great a threat the new centre was. In collaboration with local officials, i.e. the union chairman and a union member, the physician hired a group of thugs to have Nizam murdered, confident that he could make the necessary payments to the proper people, allowing him to continue his illegal work, along with his cohorts, and ensuring that the centre would not become a permanent fixture in Shimulia. Nizam lost his life, and now an almost incredible struggle for simple justice seems to be availing nothing. We have come face to face with the village. We have reached, it seems, our limit. Do we carry on with our small struggle or are we sustaining a system that would (and should) crumble, -sooner without our gallant efforts. And even if we choose to work on, can Gonoshasthaya Kendra last in its present form? How viable can a body remain when it is alien to the system in which it operates? These are questions may be others can help us answer.

The UNICEF paper BASIC SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, is an excellent piece of work. I was pleased to read it, but I was haunted throughout the reading by the paradoxes that I know will not let this plan come into being. The report stresses community involvement and an integrated approach, yet other UN agencies are simultaneously funneling money into a vertical approach to development and health problems. With World Bank and USAID funds going to support a sterilization programme which doles out money and sari incentives, how can an integrated programme be carried on through another UN agency?

UN funds and WHO advice are supporting the inauguration of four medical assistant training centres, all located in towns, and fully equipped to instruct graduates that will be ready to meet the needs of Dacca, Dubai, or London. At least 80% of the students have had 12 years of schooling previously (the requirement for medical college admittance), and 98% of the students are men. How can such a programme stress community involvement in the health care of its members? Until there is cooperation between the agencies, -at least those of the UN, with agreement on the need for community involvement and an integrated health scheme, the paper, for all its apparent value will remain 'inoperative.' Furthermore, government officials and workers, both on the local and national levels, must be willing to implement the programme in an integrated fashion, involving the community, if the UNICEF idea is to be at all productive.

Land reform and other social measures of a deep and farreaching effect must be in operation before the plan can be made viable. When upper middle class men and women represent Bangladesh at agency conference they are not going to take a strong stand for social reform against their own vested interests. Rather they will warn against 'interfering with national sovereignty,' while the programme, or any

other that might be effective, will remain on paper, an exercise in liberal expression, or at most it will reach Shimulia.

"But the farmer continues, only
stopping a moment to shift the
bundle onto his young son's back"

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VICIOUS CIRCLE REMAINS UNBROKEN IF CAUSES ARE NOT ATTACKED



25 | Learning Through Struggle: A Malaysian Kampong Against Pollution

sue tuckwell

This is the sad but simple story of a village in trouble. It's not in trouble for any of the usual reasons - no landlords, no history of poverty, no illness, no lack of natural resources.

No, its troubles were caused directly by a development planner who signed - unfortunately for our village - once too often on the bureaucratic dotted lines, thus creating a couple of shiny new examples of "national development" and so bringing upon our friends more troubles than all the landlords in the world could have devised.

Where ?

Our village is Kuala Juru, a small place of 46 households on the north coast of Peninsular Malaysia, where the Juru river flows into the Straits of Malacca. Like all the thousands of kampongs on the coast, the people of Kuala Juru have fished the river and sea for well over a hundred years. They are poor but until very recently could make 300 to 400 Malaysian dollars (2.49 Malaysian dollars = 1 US. Dollar) a month from fishing - enough to send their children to school, get medical attention when they needed it, repair their rowing boats and other equipment, and rest one or two days a week.

"Fishing is one thing we love and are good at, "say the villagers. "The skill of fishing is something precious to us, handed down from our forefathers. From the very day we are born, the sun and the water have always been in our blood. It's our life-line, our rice bowl and our link with nature."

Our villagers then, lived at the river mouth, fishing both the river and the sea. Three miles inland, crossing the river by bridge, is the highway from Ipoh to Butterworth, site of a large military base. Opposite Kuala Juru, on the other bank, and slightly upstream is the Perai Industrial Estate.

What ? Number One

The first problem for Kuala Juru was created when our friend the Bureaucrat, decided to improve the bridge over the Juru River.

The old bridge had not interfered at all with the natural flow of the river and the movement of the fishing people. But the new bridge was buttressed underneath by a solid wall of concrete slabs, so that the river did not flow under the bridge any longer. Instead the water was made to flow to one side, round the bridge, through an artificial dam. At low tide, it is released to rejoin the river lower down.

This affected the villagers in two ways.

Before, they had been able to row some seven miles upstream, to a small township, Bukit Mertajam. They could fish the length of the river, then sell their catch in Bukit Mertajam's market, naturally getting a better price than they did at the coast. Now not only was upstream fishing drastically reduced, but also the fishermen could no longer sell their fish at Bukit Mertajam.

Also, the artificial change in the flow of the river meant that the ecology of the estuary was drastically changed and the river mouth began to silt up. Fish grew scarcer and the river became so shallow that the boats could no longer move through the water at low tide.

So the bridge stopped first the fishing - then the fish. But while this misfortune was bad enough, a second and even greater misfortune was to come.

What ? Number Two

In the late sixties some official in the Penang State Government decided that some land near Kuala Juru - now Perai Industrial Estate could be cleared for factories, as part of the State's industrialization program. In 1971, a number of factories had started production and, by the end of 1975, over forty factories were in operation. Ten more were under construction and another twenty planned. However, the results of this industrialization on the environment were devastating.

It is now clear that no one had thought of the effects on the environment. The factories produce a wide range of products, from roof tiles, metal cans and badminton rackets to oil extracts, agricultural chemicals and textiles. Chemicals pour into open drains at the factory sites, are then carried into canals which finally flow into the Juru River. Foul-smelling, evil-looking, multi-coloured solid waste floats on slimy and contaminated water, out into the ocean.

In many parts of the canals and river, there is not enough oxygen for fish to survive. And, what is more disturbing, the levels of the toxic metals are most ominous: mercury at 460 times above the internationally established safety standard; lead and cadmium, 30 times above; chromium 28 times above.

The pollution grew especially serious in 1974 and the villagers began to suffer the effects acutely.

"I had a good catch that day and gave some fish to my wife to cook and the others I sold. When I ate lunch the fish had a horrible oily taste. I got very angry with my wife. Did you use diesel oil to cook this fish with? I asked her. She got very angry and shouted back at me. After that, I went to the coffee shop. My friends were there and I complained to them about my wife's cooking. I was taken aback when they too started complaining about their wives. It was then we realized that there was something drastically wrong with our river."

The situation deteriorated rapidly. The prices of their fish plunged. What fish they caught had to be sold at very low prices because of the smell and taste. One fishmonger from Bukit Mertajam said that the oily smell of the catch made the Kuala Juru fish the most repulsive on the market. Housewives in Bukit Mertajam refused to buy the fish because of the pollutants and because they were afraid they might be poisoned. The people of Kuala Juru were reduced to buying fish to eat, while selling their own fish mostly as pet food. Altogether, about thirty types of fish disappeared.

On 28 February 1976, at the invitation of the fishermen, a survey team from the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) took a boat-ride up the river. They were shocked. The surface of the river was literally covered with fish, floating wither dead or dying. Even prawns and crabs were gasping near the top of the water or floating dead in the river.

Then ?

The villagers did not take this lying down. They realized that their disasters were not just accidents. It was not fate that had built the new bridge, it was not fate that had polluted the river and killed the fish. They decided to fight back.

As early as 31 December 1971, the villagers, through the Village Committee, had written to the Prime Minister about the effects of the bridge. In March the following year, the reply -quoting a report from the Assistant District Officer of Bukit Mertajam - had come back :

"The Fisheries Authorities do not have any proof that the livelihood of residents will be adversely affected by the construction of the Juru dam. The Drainage and Irrigation Department has investigated the matter and found no evidence that the Juru River is blocked."

Two years later, when the pollutants were already considerably reducing the fishing catch, the villagers wrote to the District Officer. As a result, they received four engines and five fishing nets.

By this time the villagers were in great trouble. Pak Salleh bin Hussein tells a typical story.

"In the past we could fish on the river. Now we must row far out to sea: three miles to get any catch. See what has happened to our fishing schedules. Now it is low tide. I must wait for the water to rise again, only then can we go fishing. However long it takes, we must wait. In the past it wasn't so.

"In the past we didn't live well. But by the standards of us poor people, there was enough to live on. If we worked very hard in the month, we could be sure of \$ 300 to 400 (Malaysian dollars). But now, I get \$ 70 from my catch, at most \$ 90 in a good month.

"Take me, a father. I have to take care of seven people. I only get \$ 3 a day. For each child I send to school I must spend 50 cents. (40 cents for the bus fare and 10 cents for his snack). If I send all the three to school, how much would that be? \$ 1.50. I simply cannot afford this. So I stopped one of them going, altogether. Of the other two, neither can both go on the same day. They must go in shifts. I have a daughter. She is very good in her studies. Yes, good. But what to do? I have had to stop her now, she has to come back to cook for the household. I can only give my son 10 cents for his snack at school. His stomach is not full. How can his mind work well? How is he to study?"

Pak Salleh talks about the government's response.

"We wrote two or three reports to the authorities. This was long ago, 1971 or 1972. But nothing was done. Maybe it is thought that we kampong people, are not educated, that we are all stupid people. Whether you live or die, whether you have enough to eat or not enough that is your own business. Yes, one or two officials did come and we told them the problems. We never heard anything at all from them....."

Then ?

The villagers tried again with the Government, this time enlisting the help of the Consumers Association of Penang. CAP investigated, made tests and issued a press release to the local papers. At the end of March 1976 reporters visited the villagers and most of the Malay, Chinese and English newspapers ran stories about their plight.

In April 1976, the villagers sent a petition to the Government and invited the Chief Minister to visit their village. He, in turn, invited them to meet him and a delegation of ten people went, taking two contaminated dead fish with them. The ten outlined the villagers' problems and made some proposals for speedy help;

- an end to pollution;
- compensation for loss of income;
- aid, including modern fishing boats and equipment;
- industrial training for the young people who were out of work;
- money for the children's education and daily necessities;
- land to cultivate.

The Chief Minister agreed to provide two modern boats, and educational help from the State Scholarship Fund. He also promised to sort out their problems within thirty days.

But by this time, the villagers had little belief in promises. After hours of discussion, they decided to set up a cockle-raising industry, as the local breed of cockles seemed to be surviving the pollution reasonably well. Using their social cohesion and the hardy will to survive that was by now their main resource, they got the help of the local Fisheries Department to obtain a temporary licence for the new industry.

Hope has at last begun to return to the village. For the first time in years, for example, young men and women can afford to get married, houses are being repaired, debts paid back and children are returning to school.

In the meantime, there had been few results from the Government. By November 1976 for example, the engines and modern nets that had been promised in response to the demands had not appeared, few jobs had been found for the young people, educational assistance had not been paid.

So ?

But in a sense, our story ends on a more optimistic note. If no new disaster happens to the environment of Kuala Juru, the cockle industry should be profitable and the fishing families will survive through their own dogged determination and sense of cooperation. The fishermen, who were bold enough to adjust their thinking, are earning a livelihood from an ingenious use of their river. That it has turned out to be so speaks much for them. But the main issues cannot be swept under the cockle shells so easily.

Let us remember our bureaucrat - not of course one person, as we have said - but in fact probable dozens, who decided that the welfare of Kuala Juru's people was less important than a certain bridge and a growth in the number of factories in their planning area.

Let's look at that bridge too - Ipoh to Butterworth, is the highway, and Butterworth is, of course, the site of a very large army base. Can we begin to ask why the bridge needed to be strengthened.?

Let's look at these factories. Owned from Japan, Hong Kong, Europe or owned as joint ventures with foreign firms. By whose decision do these factories contribute to the national wealth if they destroy the livelihood, health and resources of more than 300 people? It is individuals who make those decisions, just as it is individuals who suffer from them.

The sad story of Kuala Juru is not unique, unfortunately. Fishermen near the new tourist hotels in Fiji; the people from Chisso Bay dying from Minamata disease; the people of the Niel Delta; and many similar communities in the industrialized world are asking the same question, which is, to put a simple end to a simple tale:
DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM ?



26 | Decentralisation and Self-Reliance in an Agrarian Economy : An Analysis Based upon Agricultural Cooperatives in North Vietnam

amit bhaduri

Section 1. The Social Practice of Equality

It is not altogether unexpected that post-revolution Viet Nam would achieve a considerable degree of economic and social equality. Nevertheless, the extent and scope of the social practice of equality, which has been achieved in the North of the country within a relatively short span of time, is truly striking. An economist's normal habit of thought constrains him to treat the social phenomenon of equality as almost equivalent to the narrower concept of equality in the distribution of personal income. And yet, one of the real lessons of observing the Vietnamese society in operation, is to be struck by the fact that the social practice of equality is indeed a far wider phenomenon.

Broadly speaking, one could distinguish three distinct aspects: (a) equality in personal distribution of income and the resulting pattern of occupational equality, (b) equality between the city and the countryside and (c) finally, the equality between the sexes.

With property income constituting a negligible proportion of national income in North Viet Nam, (1) earned personal income (i.e. salaries and wages) represents fairly accurately the social distribution of purchasing power. While in 1976, no detailed information was available on the size distribution of personal income, one does have information on earnings by occupations which provides a fairly good idea of the range within which personal income could normally vary. The minimum income of an adult worker in urban areas with little work experience was about 60 North Vietnamese dong(2) per month in 1976, while the maximum income in a few specialized occupations with considerable work experience could go upto 200 to 220 dong. The average income of a worker in an agricultural cooperative was about 50 dong to which must be added at least another 15 to 20 dong per adult member in a family, as additional monthly earning from the source of private-or family-plot in a cooperative(3). Thus, the range of the maximum to minimum income is around a low ratio of 4:1 in North Viet Nam.

1. The two main sources of property income results from some forms of private ownership of urban dwellings and agricultural land. But the exceedingly low house rent as well as the transition from the "lower-" to 'higher-level' of agricultural cooperatives, make property income in the form of rent an insignificant proportion (not accounting for more than two percent) of national income (privately calculated on Western conventions including the 'service sector').
2. At the official exchange rate of 1976, one U.S. dollar was almost equal to three North Vietnamese dong.

But a mere quantitative statement about the range of variation in personal income hardly does justice to the prevailing pattern of equality among occupations. The most striking aspect of occupational equality is the elimination of systematically higher income from mental as opposed to manual work. Thus, the average monthly earning of a doctor with some experience can be around 100 dongs, while that of a trained nurse with similar experience will be about the same. A professional cook, skilled bricklayer or street-sweeper can earn upto 120 dongs, while a full University professor does not usually earn any more. The chairman and chief accountants of many agricultural cooperatives often earn considerably less than some of the best workers in the same cooperatives and, what is still more important, usually a part of their income is also earned through manual work done in the cooperative. Thus, considerable equality in the distribution of personal income is combined with establishing social values which tend to discriminate less among various occupations in terms of their implied economic and social status.

This principle of equality extends not only across occupations but also across space. Thus, it does not merely mean that income earned by a member of an agricultural cooperative or a state-farm worker in the countryside is more or less the same as earning of an urban worker. It implies something more fundamental than equality of earnings. The well-known difference in the quality of life between rural and urban areas which exists in most societies and particularly in developing countries, is largely absent in Viet Nam. There are two important elements which contribute substantially to this gap between urban and rural life. First, social and infrastructural facilities tend to be much higher in urban areas and secondly, access to specialized skills and services is very often an almost exclusive privilege of the better-off urban population. In both these respects, the spatial pattern of development seems to have been far more uniform in North Viet Nam.

This uniformity has largely been achieved through the agricultural cooperative movement throughout the countryside. Thus, each agricultural cooperative has a primary health centre which is linked to the district hospital for all cases needing specialized treatment. Similarly, all cooperatives have primary schools linked to a secondary schooling system. Thus, basic needs of housing, health and education are met through the cooperative system itself. More important perhaps is the fact that the quality of these services are usually no worse in the countryside. Housing condition on an average was certainly better in rural than in urban areas of North Viet Nam in 1976. It is also not an altogether unusual practice to find that some of the most distinguished doctors are attached to district hospitals, rather than being exclusively concentrated in a few big urban hospitals. Again, the main lesson which one learns in this respect is that, the economic analyst's notion of the

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3. Five per cent of the cooperative land is reserved as a rule for family cultivation, usually land attached to the residence of the family. In 'low-level' cooperatives, this plot of land is the private property of the family which it even has the right to sell. In 'high-level' cooperatives, this becomes collective property on which the family retains the "occupancy right" i.e. of using and deriving income from it.
 4. The evidence that I personally collected in eleven agricultural cooperatives of North Viet Nam is mixed and ambiguous on this point. There is likely to be some (not significant) discrimination in pay, operating through the system of 'works-point'. It was not possible for me to come to any definite quantitative assessment on this point.
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cooperative system as essentially an organization for allocating collective labour is a highly partial and perhaps misleading view. For, it has another economic role which is at least equally important-and, that is to serve as the basic organizational pivot of a countrywide "delivery system" of basic needs. The economic achievements of the Vietnamese cooperative movement becomes apparent as soon as its role as a "delivery system" is realized.

The question of equality among sexes is a more intricate one. It is difficult to capture this phenomenon adequately in terms of conventional cliché like "equal pay for equal work." (4) Indeed, the notion of equality goes considerably deeper in Vietnamese society. Even to the most superficial observer, it will be apparent that, not only do women have almost complete economic independence, but more fundamentally, they perform all sorts of work in every field which were traditionally reserved for men. (5) Given the fact that until recently Viet Nam was a traditional agrarian society with strong feudal values, this is unquestionably a remarkable achievement. One could speculate to what extent such rapid transformation of social values are the outcome of the exigencies of a long-drawn war, rather than being the consequence of a deliberate social process; but such speculations seem somewhat meaningless in the present context. For, the character of a "people's war" is such, that it is impossible to separate in a meaningful way the mobilization process for the war from other social processes at work. Consequently, the emerging sense of equality among the sexes is perhaps better treated as a part of the overall social transformation of Viet Nam.

Section 2. Role of Agricultural Cooperatives in the Social Practice

It is difficult to imagine how this impressive structure of equality, briefly outlined earlier, could be maintained in North Viet Nam without a pivotal organizational role being assigned to the agricultural cooperatives. There seem to be at least two major ways in which the cooperative system carries out its supportive role of the practice of social equality.

First, as already indicated, it operates as a delivery system for collective consumption goods like education and health. At the same time, the cooperative is also the organizational base of the well-developed public distribution system for essential commodities in the country. The two-way exchange between industrial and agricultural goods is largely conducted through the cooperative system. The members of an agricultural cooperative get their essential food-stuff, particularly rice, at reasonable, controlled price directly from the cooperative. At the same time, through the obligatory selling quota of agricultural produce for each cooperative, the State is able to procure foodgrains at fixed prices for the system of public distribution in urban areas. By fulfilling the quota obligation, the cooperatives obtain in return basic manufactured goods like textile and fuel from the State enterprises. There are usually two other types of cooperatives to facilitate this exchange between urban and rural areas: A commercial cooperative whose function include purchase and sale of goods, particularly retail trading in State industrial products as well as purchase of agricultural produce from the

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5. This includes, for example, heavy agricultural work of tilling, traditionally done only by men. An interesting contrast often came to mind between the social position of women in Viet Nam and in industrial capitalism of Western Europe. In the latter case, typically some jobs (such as secretarial job) are almost exclusively meant for women as a part of the social convention.
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agricultural cooperative on behalf of the State. There is also a credit cooperative, usually formed through contribution of shares by cooperating members. It performs the functions of commercial bank for individual members as well as for the whole agricultural cooperative, by taking deposits and advancing loans on individual as well as collective basis. But normally, the credit cooperative advances short term seasonal loans to the agricultural cooperative, while longer term loans (of 3 to 5 years) are granted by the Central or State Bank. The financial support from the State thus operates normally through the central banking system, but is occasionally delegated also to the local credit cooperatives as an exercise in decentralized administration of credit.(6)

Secondly, the cooperative system supports the social practice of equality by providing an effective organ to deal with the rural employment question. It has been a well-known problem in most developing agrarian economies of Asia, that, any direct attack on poverty and inequality tends to get diffused because the government seldom have the organizational ability to "reach" the poor and unemployed directly. It becomes extremely difficult for government-run public works programmes to create the right kind of jobs, as expenditure leakages take place through contractors and overhead costs of maintaining an administrative machinery for organizing such programmes. As a result, quite a substantial portion of the expenditure on public works usually leaks into creating jobs and income for contractors and bureaucrats, instead of benefitting the intended poorest sections of the population. Organization of agricultural cooperatives at the village level in North Viet Nam does provide the government with an administrative framework, which can support such public work programmes far more effectively. Such work programmes then become investment programmes of the cooperative, at times partly financed by a grant of soft loan from the State through the Central Bank, but also at times, exclusively financed by the cooperative itself. This achieves a considerable degree of decentralization in the planning of public works and agricultural investments, both in terms of the physical form of the investment as well as its financing arrangements.

This decentralization of investment planning through the agricultural cooperatives is particularly facilitated by another important fact. In the absence of any significant private property rights on land, the tricky question of, "who should benefit and who should pay for public works", is largely solved. For example, a road or irrigation works programme financed by the government may result in substantial increase in land values in a market economy. Thus, the government pays for the programme while private landowners reap the benefits and, in the absence of the government's ability to tax away the benefits, the associated employment generation programme fails to become self-financing over time. This is a dilemma which is largely avoided under cooperative property relations, as the principle of organization tends to approximate the idea that "those who benefit should pay" (except when the grant element from the Central Bank in the financing of such programmes becomes predominant). The major lesson which one seems to learn in this context is that, self-financing should be an important component of any programme of decentralized public works, if it is to become self-sustaining over time and unabated private property rights in land frequently appear as a hindrance to the process. Thus, a considerable degree of self-reliance at the level of the cooperative appears to be a crucial component in the decentralization of investment planning. This, in turn, entails as its

6. See, *Revolution in the Village Nam Hong, 1945-75* by Pham Cuong and Nguyen Van Ba (Hanoi, 1976) pp. 33-48 for micro description of the interrelated working of these three types of cooperatives in a specific case.

precondition important restructuring of either agrarian property rights or of the tax system so as to be able to tax effectively the capital gains at the local level. But there lies precisely the political question—a government which is capable of sincerely operating such a tax structure is surely also capable of bringing about the requisite changes in private property rights, which after all, often turn out to be a simpler alternative?

Section 3. Principle of Voluntariness in Cooperatives

The development of the movement for agricultural cooperation in North Viet Nam combined two distinct processes over time—it was a political process as well as a techno-economic process. As a political campaign, it was started in the mid-fifties for the mobilization of the poor and lower middle peasants against the emerging trend towards "capitalism in the countryside", which had begun to reappear following the anti-feudal land-reform of 1953-56. Since the earlier land-reforms of 1953-56 had mobilized the poor and landless peasants on the political slogan of "land to the tiller", by creating small scale private property in land in the form of small peasant proprietorship, the drive for agricultural cooperation went against the newly-won property rights of the peasants. This created a dilemma that had to be solved through exceedingly careful handling of the problem. With the launching of the campaign for agricultural cooperation in early 1958, the conflict inherent in the situation was largely sought to be resolved on the basis of the application of a "triple principle" in agricultural cooperation—voluntariness in participation, mutual benefit in the organization of work and emphasis on democratic management. Thus, the historical situation compelled the political campaign to become democratic, based upon the principle of voluntary participation. The April 1959 resolution of the Party Central Committee stated this in no uncertain terms:

"It is essential to educate them (small and poor peasants), to persuade them so that they join of their own free will. While they are reflecting, weighing the pros and cons, we must have the patience to wait for them and convince them by means of the concrete results of cooperative farming, such as higher yields, higher returns.

"When they join the cooperative, one must take care of their legitimate interests and work out a just, appropriate solution to problems arising from land, cattle and farm-tools they bring in."

This principle of voluntariness, which also left each cooperative farmer free to leave the cooperative at any time, was maintained throughout the cooperative movement. This made the transition from private to cooperative production in agriculture a gradual process. The early stages of the process were characterised by 'low-level' cooperative based upon mutual aid teams. They were basically labour cooperatives with considerable private ownership rights to land. Rights to private property invariably meant private property income in the form of rent which could typically constitute 25 to 30 percent of the produce of the cooperative. With the development of the cooperative movement, this share of rent was gradually reduced, as the principle of payment according to work began to replace payment on the basis of property ownership. A cooperative reached the "high-level", when rent and other property income became an insignificant part of the total cooperative income, as land became collective property of the cooperative. This process of gradual transformation from "low" to "high-level" cooperative can best be illustrated with concrete examples, say of cooperatives in Thai Binh province. There, for instance, the proportion paid out as rent decreased gradually from 30 percent of income in 1959 to 15.2 percent in 1962, 8 percent in 1964 and 0.3 percent in 1965. This small remaining proportion continued to be given only to households lacking labour force, typically

childless old people or disabled persons. To-day, in North Viet Nam, the 'high-level' cooperative is the predominant form of agricultural organization, with 93.2 percent of peasant households as members of such cooperatives in 1975.(7) And, interestingly enough, even today, the Statutes of Agricultural Cooperatives (high-level) emphasise those original principles of voluntariness, mutual benefit and democratic functioning in its very first two articles.(8)

Along with political mobilization of the poorer peasantry, the campaign for agricultural cooperation had to be techno-economically successful. This was particularly important, for, without such success over time, it would have been impossible to maintain the principle of voluntary participation; nor would it have been feasible to have democratic decision making at the local level, which usually presupposes a significant degree of self-reliance. Partly the "delivery system" of basic needs organized through the cooperatives, which has briefly been described above, added to their attraction and thus enabled the principle of voluntary participation to become operative. More important, however, seems to be the concept of "work-democracy" which became a material force underlying the development of the cooperative movement.

Section 4. "Work-Democracy" in Cooperatives

Democracy at work place, in contrast to a set of abstract democratic or civil rights, is a more tangible phenomenon, as it gets defined in relation to the day-to-day work arrangements among the members of a cooperative. Although the abstract or general rights according to the Statutes, which members of an agricultural cooperative usually enjoy, are quite impressive, the very basis of work-democracy lies not in coded rules and statutes, but in the way work is actually organized.

In a fairly large, 'high-level' cooperative, production is organized both along "vertical" as well as "horizontal" pattern of division of labour. A vertical pattern means grouping of cooperative workers in "work teams" (consisting usually of anywhere between 10 to 200 workers), where each work team is entrusted with a specific work like irrigation, plantation, animal husbandry, fishing, construction etc. But even for each specified job e.g. irrigation, there may be several work teams or a "production brigade" spread over different areas of the cooperative and this is described as the horizontal aspect of division of labour. Since these work teams constitute the fundamental units for organizing production, inter-team as well as intra-team relations largely define the functional basis of a cooperative.

Each work-team elects its head and deputy head(10), to keep records of "work-points" on the basis of which personal income get distributed. But the basic principle of assigning "work-points" in a cooperative, both at the inter- and at the intrateam level, is thoroughly discussed and then approved in the General Assembly of all the members in a cooperative. Thus, within a work-team a personalized system of assigning work-load taking into account health condition etc. may operate, while inter-team considerations relating to what would be the rating of various

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7. Source: Daily newspaper of North Viet Nam, Nhan Dan dated 24.12.1975.
 8. Source: Statutes of Agricultural Cooperatives (high-level), Rural Publishing House, Viet Nam, 1976.
 9. See ibid.
 10. ibid, Article 13.
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jobs in terms of work-points is collectively decided at the General Assembly.

It will be noted that, without exaggeration, this work-point system is perhaps one of the most democratic aspects of organization of work and income distribution. For, it is the general body of workers who decide on the work-points corresponding to each type of job as well as the working days for each member. This is quite different from the "factory system" under capitalism where workers are confronted with a given wage structure.

Secondly, such a collective decision process usually tends to reduce the gap between 'management' and 'workers'. In many cooperatives, elected members of the Management as well as Audit Committee have to supplement their (collectively decided) below average income by doing normal manual work as members of a work-team.

Finally, it will be of some interest even to academic economists to note that the division between "consumption" and "investment" of the net income of the cooperative is typically arrived at through collective discussions at the General Assembly (within the legally stipulated range of 5-10 percent). The democratic element in this procedure may well be contrasted against investment decisions taken by the "board of directors" in a large corporation.

These are some of the concrete elements of work-democracy. And precisely because it is a democracy of the work place, it involves for more continuous participation by the members. But there also lies the dilemma—continuous participation at the level of the local organization is not necessarily adequate for ensuring democratic functioning of the macro-political system. For, it may leave undefined the relation between the state and the cooperative or between the local organs of the Party and the cooperative. To an outsider it seems that both the strength and the weakness of the agrarian socialism in Viet Nam are juxtaposed precisely here. On the one hand, there does undoubtedly exist a genuine democracy of the work place, unsurpassed by almost any "factory system" under capitalism. But, on the other hand, the connection between such work-democracy and political democracy in the larger context is still virtually non-existent. Although it sounds a heresy today, the future of agrarian socialism in Viet Nam would seem to lie in successfully counterposing the self-reliant, decentralized economic power of the cooperatives and their practice of work-democracy against possible tendencies of political authoritarianism by the State or the Party. These are of course mere speculations about a desirable future course. But in the meantime, the crux of the matter is simple: in a poor peasant economy work-democracy has far greater direct relevance and appeal compared to political democracy in the larger context. It is true that the very process of successful economic development will begin to raise those very issues of political democracy and its relation to work democracy which have less immediate relevance in to-day's Viet Nam. But, then, the method of history has always been to solve the main contradictions of today, only by raising new contradictions for tomorrow. It is not likely that Viet Nam or any other country will prove to be an altogether exception to this general scheme.

27 | People's Organization : Transforming a "Sheet of Loose Sand" in China

f.a.o. study mission

The Chinese claim that a principal factor responsible for their development breakthroughs-described in earlier chapter-is the organization of the Chinese people. Through communes, the people are organized simultaneously for productive effort, community action and group and individual self-development, through popular participation and self-reliance. The communes translate into practice Chinese concepts and policies regarding people's organization. Hence, the Mission felt this aspect merited close study, especially in the light of Sun Yat-sen's despairing remark, made half a century ago, that the Chinese peasantry constituted a "sheet of loose sand".

Today, misunderstanding persists regarding the nature and role of people's organizations in China. Ideological differences give rise to varying concepts of the State, society, the individual; democracy, government, and what is "public" or "private".

Questions are, therefore, raised: What do the Chinese consider to be people's organizations? What are their main distinctive features? How do these resemble people's organizations in other countries? etc.

The Mission believes that an understanding of people's organizations will help place a study of Chinese agricultural development in a better perspective. Therefore, this report provides extended treatment of these questions.

View from Without

Outside China, the term "people's organization" loosely describes a variety of voluntary, autonomous associations and institutions. Together, these are commonly known now as the "non" or "extra-governmental sector". These terms have an accepted place in the Charter of the United Nations and its agencies.

Common to all is their claim to a "voluntary" non-profit character, independence of direct government control and freedom from "political motivation".

Equivalents for the new indigenous, groups in developing countries have been the "non-governmental" voluntary agencies that emerged in Europe and the USA.

In developing countries, government attitudes towards their indigenous groups have generally been laissez-faire. The attitudes are tempered on the one hand by government supervision through registration, and on the other by varying degrees of active promotion. This is true especially in regard to primary groups (cooperatives, rural development

organizations, etc.).

A trend to integrate indigenous groups more closely in national development efforts coupled with closer supervision has emerged in recent years.

View from Within

China's people's organizations have roots deep in their traditional predecessors. The Chinese view is shaped by their history. Like all other countries, China developed over the years its own traditional rural organizations. As elsewhere, these were basically of two kinds, reflecting the distinction between State and society. For tax collection, the State imposed the pao-chia; for policy and administrative control, it introduced the li-chia. Both were artificial administrative groups of rural households.

Within the "natural" village society, the constant pressures of war, famine, external oppression, and natural calamity generated spontaneous forms of mutual aid and work organization. In the border regions, when the Chinese Communist experience was moulded in the Yan'an (Yanan) period, there were traditional forms: the pienkung (labour cooperation), the chakung (collective hiring out of labour), the huonia (joint use of work animals) and the huochingti (joint tilling).

Most of these grass-root village work organizations were kinship groupings, based on clan and family. They were often short-term, limited to specific purposes. Generally, they were dominated by clan elders, rich peasants, or the local rural elite.

Over and above these village organizations were the secret societies, the earliest traditional Chinese form of "mass organizations". These tended to be the foci of people's resistance of feudal oppression, and the organizational centres for the numerous peasant rebellions.

These traditional organizations rarely reached the lowest levels of peasant society. Economically and politically the Chinese farmer remained an isolated and powerless figure.

The Chinese frequently use, both in authorized English translations and through interpreters, the phrases: popular organizations, people's organizations, social organizations, mass organizations, etc.

If one were to apply the categories of western sociology of people's organizations in China, primary groups would mean the mutual aid teams based on earlier traditional village organizations, the farmer associations of 1949-52 and those set up in the sixties, the production teams, the smaller production brigades, and in the cities the residents' committees and the neighbourhood groups. In all these, member relations are "face to face", direct and frequent. Among secondary groups we would include four main types of what the Chinese generally call "mass organizations" or "social organizations".

1. The National Trade Union Federation, the Women's Federation, the Communist Youth League, the Students' Federation and the various Red Guard groups that emerged after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.
2. The many friendship associations, committees and institutes for promoting relations with other countries.
3. Professional or technical associations.

4. The vestigial remnants of the old democratic parties that formed part of the early United Front with the CCP.

Transmission Belts

It may not be relevant to describe these secondary associations in any detail. We need only note that their main purpose, especially those in (1) above, is to serve as transmission belts or extensions of the CCP for its ideological and educational programmes. Some continue to have other service, welfare, and executive functions (e.g. the Women's Federation in relation to the Marriage Law and Women's rights; the Trade Unions' Federation in relation to labour insurance, etc.). The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution showed that in certain circumstances the Chinese socio-political system has room for national and local pressure and civic groups to emerge and play an active role (e.g. the Red Guard groups, student activists, etc.).

Freedom of association is written into the Constitution of 17 January 1975.⁽¹⁾ Clearly this freedom is subject to restrictions based on ideological and political consideration. All mass associations are required to be registered; and to conform to certain regulations, the principles of democratic centralism, and the Party line. In these respects, China's practice is in no way unique. Similar restrictions are imposed in all other countries.

There are other groups in China which cannot be easily classified as primary or secondary. The most important of these are the communes, and the larger brigades. They may be called intermediate groups—intermediate in the sense of being in varying stages or forms of transition from State control to direct people's control. The commune is the nearest to having made this transition. It still retains certain State officers, but has now replaced the *hsiang*, the earlier State administrative unit. On the other hand, it is not a small "face to face" primary group. Nor is it a "mass organization" in the sense of those described above. The commune and the large brigade also have another intermediate function, as coordinating and service units to the primary groups and as links with the State administrative, planning and commercial organs. In all these, the key Chinese concept is: changing the social relations of production has priority over development of production resources.

Included among intermediate groups are the commercial organizations, e.g. the supply and marketing cooperatives, which are in fact State-controlled and resemble similar large "cooperatives" in other developing countries. They too are neither "face to face" groups, nor "mass organizations" yet, and are at the earliest stages of transition from State to people's organizations.

Primary Groups

The Party's epic Long March in 1934 became a quest not only for new rural base areas but also for new policies of relationship to the peasants, and more effective forms of organizing the farmers for production, ideological education, and mass support. The Yan'an (Yanan) period 1934-49 was one of agonizing trial and error. On 1 October 1943, the Party Central Committee issued its directive entitled "Starting a Movement to Reduce Rents, Produce, Support the Government, and Love the People". This directive made clear the vital importance of basing rural organization for production on traditional mutual aid practices. The Party had finally begun to sink its roots in the traditional mutual aid organizations of the "natural" Chinese village.

1. Article 28, The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, op.sit., (p.27-28).

Seen in retrospect, the Party directive of October 1943 was the seed from which grew China's people's organizations of today: through the stages of the farmers' associations, the mutual aid teams, the low-level agricultural production cooperatives, the advanced agricultural production cooperatives into the full bloom of the three-tiered structure of the people's communes.

In the Chinese language, a people's commune is "gung she". "Gung" means public, "she" translates into organization. In China, therefore, public organization is equated with people's organization.

It is also significant that when the Chinese translate "gung she" into English, they use the phrase "people's communes".

It is against this background that the Mission outlines what it considers to be the significant features of people's organizations in China. One is the principle basic to people's organizations in China: collectivity.

Stages

China is a State committed to socialism and advancing towards communism. It is, therefore, a fundamental belief that individual ownership must yield to ownership by the whole people. The Chinese Constitution of 17 January 1975 distinguishes two main forms or stages of ownership at present: "socialist collective ownership by the working people" and "socialist ownership by the whole people".(2)

Even with the early phase of land reform, it was clearly intended that individual peasant ownership was only a temporary phase. Despite individual ownership of land, the poor farmer still remained isolated, insecure, and vulnerable. Ideology, reinforced by experience with the peasantry, taught the Party that only with solidarity could the farmer progressively grow in productive strength and freedom from oppression.

The Chinese, therefore, see ownership as part of a continuously expanding process of collectivization. Full ownership of the means of production and the "basic accounting unit" are to move progressively upwards: from the production team through the production brigade, as already with Tachai, to larger collectivities (at commune, county and provincial levels). Consummation will be achieved when ownership, operation, and accounting are entirely by the society (or organization) of the whole people.

Thus, the Mission observed that one objective of the national conference on Tachai, held in October 1975, was to launch a campaign to carry the present stage of collectivization another step forward.

Production

A priority Chinese concern continues to be people's organization for production. The Chinese regard it as the basic pre-condition. The individual small farmer, on a small holding, is too isolated and poor to hold his or her own against larger farmers.

Three implications flow from this principle. Collective organization of people is directed to: (1) collective production; and involves (2) collective incentives, and (3) collective self-reliance.

These factors contrast sharply with people's organizations in most

2. Article 5, op. cit., (p.13).

other countries. In the latter, organization through agricultural production cooperatives or farmers' associations is not to promote collective production, but to service individual peasant production. Incentives, though organized through credit, and marketing and supply cooperatives, are directed to individual effort. They are intended to stimulate the individual member. Self-reliance likewise is conceived in terms of the individual.

Outside China, people are organized to help them serve their own interests better. In China, people are organized so that individuals can help each other to serve common interests. Individual well-being then flows from the total well-being and achievements of the collective.

The right of peasants to manage their own concerns (as in the team, brigade and commune) underpins the collective structure. A social consciousness is generated, as is a sense of recognition, participation and belonging. An assurance of personal security and of protection against both domination and neglect-bogeys that have haunted peasantry, always and everywhere—are also generated.

Employment and Mobilization of People

It is the collective principle in people's organization that has made possible, especially at the production team level, full employment and mobilization of rural manpower. People's organization ensures maximum investment of the "disguised saving potential" in human labour for rural infrastructural projects. Collectivized organization for production and investment eliminates labour as a market commodity and the individual farm wage as a direct incentive. Chinese theory and practice simply run counter to the economic principle of marginal labour productivity as the determinant of rural employment levels. The production team modernizes the flexibility and human intimacy of the old extended family.

Each individual is a member of a primary collective: the production team. Where the size of the work is beyond the capacity of the primary collective, the resources of the "intermediate" collective—the brigade and commune—are drawn upon.

In effect, the Chinese concept of the collective is basically that of a family unit designed to expand or contract to match the demands of work with the supply of workers.

The responsibilities of the collective can stretch, as the Mission observed, from the assignment of children to gather manure, to the mass mobilization that made the Red Flag Canal a reality. In this way, literally billions of days of human employment have been created for productive and meaningful work for the collective.

What motivates people for such collective work?

The Chinese are keenly aware that the larger the collective and objectives, the weaker the motivation tends to be.

The Chinese answer is a combination of material and non-material incentives. Workers receive pay in terms of work points. They are also constantly subjected to social pressures: discussion, criticism, and study of the collective needs.

Security and Welfare

The same principles explain why visitors to China see no beggars. Every person in China is automatically a member of his or her primary collective group—production team in the village or neighbourhood group in

the city-as he or she is a member of a nuclear human family.

Membership of a primary people's organization in a village or city is, thus, involuntary, if not overtly compulsory. The individual is bound to the group through a ration card. Each individual's ration card for grain, oil, cloth, etc. is attached to the store of the primary group. The ration card is not transferable, except with the group's permission.

Paradoxically, beggars and vagrants abound in countries where membership in primary people's organizations is based on "voluntary" membership.

In the basic rural primary group-the production team-care of each member is the collective responsibility of all. Each team has a separate welfare fund from which it provides for the genuinely disadvantaged, the sick, the old and handicapped. Here also, the collective interests of the primary group, its social pressures, public criticism, and local leadership, combine to eliminate the loafers or malingerers. "He who does not work" as the 1975 Constitution puts it, "neither shall he eat". (3)

Similarly, all other aspects of public security, health and welfare, administration, and the settlement of disputes, are the first and basic responsibility of the primary group of people's organizations.

Integration and Linkages

People's organizations blanket the whole of China. There is no person in China who is not a member of one (often more than one) people's organization. State activity is regarded as necessary, but is subject to criticism. The Chinese distrust of "bureaucratism" and "commandism" is rooted in generations of oppressive mandarin rule.

Alongside, the ubiquitous nature of people's organizations in China is the constant effort to integrate them into the total socio-economic system by an intricate network of horizontal and vertical linkages.

The planning system is flexible and dynamics. A less well-known illustration is the way the mass organizations like the Trade Union's Federation, the Women's Federation, the Communist Youth League, the Red Guard groups, etc., are linked to the commune structure. These mass organizations serve as auxiliaries to the Party in the latter's educational/ideological programmes, and as reservoirs for new basic level cadres.

Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a most important means of linkage is the system of revolutionary committees (from the provincial levels to the communes). These committees combine Party cadres, technicians, peasants and workers to form the new permanent management organs. The critical new element in this Three-In-One combination is the active participation of actual workers and peasants at the management level in all units. Every briefing session the Mission had, during its visit to nearly 40 work units, was with the members of each unit's revolutionary committee, never with a single official or Party member.

Spark Plugs

The meaning of "cadre" in China is simply a leader, whether in the army, the Party, or a State or commercial organ, or in a people's orga-

nization. The term is used not only with reference to the Party. As far back as 1938. Chairman Mao referred to "the need for many leadership cadres possessing both ability and virtue". In his call for "non-Party cadres", he urged that the fullest use be made of the "great leadership talent that exists outside the Party."

The concern has always been for more quality cadres to work with people's organizations at the basic rural levels. There was massive recruitment of such cadres from demobilized People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel during the revolutionary upsurge of the Great Leap Forward.

Nevertheless, recruitment and training of cadres to cover the country's network of people's (and other) organizations still remain a problem. Four massive campaigns were underway at the time of the Mission's visit to create a nationwide human reservoir of cadres to fill the two basic needs: the qualitative need for "redness" with expertise.

The first mass campaign was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution itself which generated the still continuing momentum of the Red Guard Movement; the second, the special May 7th Cadre Training Schools launched by Chairman Mao in May 1966 "to train (potential or present) social lords into social servants"; the third, the encouragement of regular mass youth work-camps in the countryside; and the fourth, the revolution in education that aims to make all society a school, to cater to "worker-peasant-soldier students", and to integrate political consciousness with relevant specialist knowledge and skills.

Top Bracket

The relationship between people's organizations and political leadership in China is not seen in the terms (familiar outside China) of a sovereign benign Government and a "voluntary" non-governmental sector, based on "freedom of association".

In China, the paramount political authority is not the Government but the Party. Legitimacy for the Party's political leadership derives ideologically from Marxism-Leninism and from Mao Tse-tung thought and, legally, from the National Constitution. Together these two sources give expression to the more basic moral legitimacy of the Party as "the core of leadership of the whole Chinese people". Many provisions of the 1975 National Constitution and the 1973 Party Constitution underline the supremacy of the Party over the State and its special role.

The State (i.e. Government) in China is the instrument of the Party. The Party, now comprising a membership of 30 million, is responsible for the organization of the people, using State organs where necessary.

Two startling conclusions emerge: people's organizations are indeed non-governmental or extra-governmental in China. What is more significant, the Party is the supreme people's organization in China. The Party is also not merely non-governmental or extra governmental, but supra-governmental. Through the Party (the supreme body), people's organizations are meant to control and direct the Government.

The Chinese point of reference is the people, not the Government. The distinction the Chinese make is between the people's sector and the non-people's sector, rather than between the governmental sector and the non-governmental sector. The rationale of the people's commune is that it represents the first major stage in the absorption of the Government by the people's sector at the level of the hsiang, i.e. "socialist collective ownership (and management) by the working people". From this stage, it is envisaged that absorption will continue progressively to "socialist ownership (and management) by the whole people".

Political Consciousness

People's organization has vital relevance as a principal objective of the Chinese leadership-the development of the Chinese people's political consciousness.

During field visits ranging from kindergartens to pig farms to embroidery and jade factories, one of the most common terms the Mission encountered was "political consciousness". Like most other visitors to China, conditioned by Western connotations of the word "politics", it took time for the Mission to appreciate the meaning which the Chinese give to the term.

A simple definition of political consciousness would be a sense of the priority of community over the individual, and a sense of the priority of the working class over all other classes; and an understanding of the implications of these priorities for both individuals and groups, in terms of the power, duties and rights of each in relation to the other.

The area of action that the Chinese consider political is, therefore, far broader than that in other countries. Almost every act that has significance or exemplary value for the collective, is political: collection of manure, conscientious swatting of flies, the care of tools, coming to work on time, etc.

People's organizations are the channel through which their "lead" organ-the Party-inculcates this socio-political awareness in the Chinese. This awareness, in turn, is the basis of the non-material incentives for stimulating change among the masses.

Bitter Speech

The Mission observed how even Chinese museums, parks, art galleries, etc., are made deliberate tools of a process-simultaneously political, educational and ethical-whereby people are made aware of the inequities of the feudal and colonial past and of the need to overcome these through collective class struggle. Similarly pensioners and old people, with experience of pre-1949 suffering, are deliberately employed in the conditioning of the young by "speaking bitterness" (i.e. relating their sufferings of the past).

In Shanghai in the Kung Jan Workers' Settlement Kindergarten for six-year-old girls, members observed how a young teacher, with the help of flip charts, stimulated animated group discussion on a story illustrating the need for a sense of community. The Mission was told that it was watching a kindergarten lesson in "political consciousness".

The Chinese do not believe that private greed results in public good. On the contrary, it is firmly held that concentration on the public good is the best means of satisfying private need.

China's leadership is the first to admit that the general level of political consciousness is below ideal levels. The continuing struggle between the "two lines" is evidence of this. Nevertheless, what impressed the Mission was the intensity of the leadership's effort to strive towards its goal. Already China has shown that a developing country need not necessarily be a "soft State".

"Quis Custodiet..."

In this massive effort at political conscientization, a crucial factor is the relationship between the Party as the "lead" people's organization, and other people's organizations. The relationship con-

stantly sought after reflects the organizational principle of "Democratic Centralism" and the operational principle of the "Mass Line".

Why is this relation so critical?

These two principles-the organizational one of "Democratic Centralism" and the operational one of the "Mass Line"- are fundamental. It is only through them that the Party's roles as vanguard and leader are guaranteed.

The Chinese record is not one of undiluted success. Rather its chief lesson is one of conscious and constant struggle against failure.

Yet the preoccupation and emphasis on the People-Party interaction to ensure purity of political will has resulted in one other outstanding feature: viz. the much greater identity of interests between the people and their political leadership than is evident in other developing countries. In China, more than elsewhere, the needs of the people are the priorities of their leaders. Political will of the leadership is seen as a function of the political consciousness of the people.

The Chinese experience is witness to the fact that this identity of Party and People is not easily won; and once won, not easily retained. As elsewhere, the tendency always exists for the leadership to become alienated from the people through "commandism", "bureaucratism", "economism", and the corruption of power and vested interest to which all leadership is vulnerable.

Who then is to purify the Party, to guard the guards, to lead the leaders?

Chairman Mao had a forthright answer: it is the people themselves who must purify their Party, guard their guards and lead their leaders. The people must be led to exercise mastery over their leaders.

In China, the organization of people through nationwide people's communes is the first major stage in their quest for this mastery. En- viable levels have been reached of cohesive self-reliant organization, of community consciousness, and of discipline and action. The success is neither unqualified nor final. Yet, the Chinese surely no longer answer to Sun Yat-sen's sad description of them a half century ago-as "a sheet of loose sand".

8 | Small Farmers of Nepal Show the Way

kamla bhasin

baljit malik

Tupche is situated in the Trishuli valley, about 70 kilometres west of Katmandu, surrounded by hills, some of which were snow clad during our second visit earlier this year in April.

A tiny semi-brick room, which can accommodate four or five people if they sit on chairs, or up to fifteen if they sit on the ground, is the office of the Small Farmers Development Project (SFDP) of the Nuwakot area. On our second visit we saw a big red banner on one of the outside walls of the office saying "WELCOME". This banner, we were told later on, is now permanently on "welcoming duty" for the benefit of the large number of visitors that the SFDP has begun to attract. On hearing this, we frankly felt a little guilty.

What brings so many visitors to this tiny office is the success of the experiment that has been going on here for barely two years; an experiment to organize the very poor small and marginal farmers and landless labourers of two Panchayats into strong and effective groups. The idea is that, organized into effective groups the poor peasants/farmers will be in a better position to receive and make use of the benefits of rural development.

Some of those ideas on development, which are normally only discussed at conferences, are actually being put into practice here. The seeds of some currently popular concepts of development have been carefully sown into this project. What is more, the small farmers and landless labourers of this area have accepted these seeds as their own. After first being cautious, even suspicious, they now believe that the SFDP, unlike other projects which were started and finished without being of benefit to them, is good for them. In fact, they are the ones who are now very much involved in actually running the project. They have become the subjects of development and are not merely its passive objects. Indeed, peasants and farmers now have an air of self-confidence about them as they also experience the excitement of planning and implementing their own development.

How the Project Began

This "little" project has long connections, related as it is to a big organization like FAO. What is remarkable however is that, in spite of these "lofty" connections, the project has maintained its smallness, simplicity and austerity. Normally, the very mention of such connections makes one think of smart offices, imported vehicles, machinery, and, in addition, foreign experts - the unusual package of expensive "commodities". The SFDP is mostly free from such "inputs" - except perhaps the over-frequent visitors from international organizations!

In 1973, FAO/UNDP initiated a regional project called the Asian Survey of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, or ASARRD for short. The main objective of ASARRD was to examine the achievements and to identify the bottlenecks or problems in implementing agrarian reform and rural development with reference to the needs of the small farmers/fisherfolk and landless agricultural labourers in Asia.

Nine countries in the region - Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Lao, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand - participated in this project. Each country conducted multi-level, multi-disciplinary field level workshops in rural areas, in which personnel from the highest to the lowest level in the hierarchy of various departments sat together with small farmers and peasants, to see how the special problems of small farmers/fisherfolk and landless agricultural labourers could be tackled. The political, social and economic conditions in which these people have to earn their livelihood were also studied. The results of the country workshops were then discussed in a regional follow-up seminar in Bangkok.

The main conclusion reached through the ASARRD dialogues was that the small and marginal peasants had by and large not benefitted from the rural development efforts made by the governments of those Asian countries that had been studied. And it was felt that they would continue to remain in the hazy hinterland of development unless a basic departure from current trends could be made, i.e. by carrying out policies that positively discriminated in favour of the small farmer/peasant sector. Thus, one of the main recommendations of ASARRD was that a receiving/utilizing system had to be built up among small farmers and peasants at the grass-roots to enable them to take advantage of the facilities and services being made available by the "local delivery system", or different government programmes. Small, multi-functional groups would need to be organized, not as a confrontation movement to secure more rights, but as a step toward bettering the socio-economic strength of small farmers and peasants by establishing a greater role for them in production.

The Experiment in Nepal

Nepal was the first country to implement an experimental project along these lines. It was set up in two different agro-ecological areas of the country, in Janakpur District in the plains and in Nuwakot District in the hills.

The Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), the national agency responsible for the SFDP, is assisted by a National Coordination Committee, composed of representatives from the different ministries, departments and corporations directly involved in small farmer development. This committee functions as an overall policy-making body. At the project level, there is a Sub-Project Implementation Committee whose members are the various district-level officers from different line agencies. This committee is responsible for the actual implementation of the project.

The project aims at helping 6,000 families of small farmers, tenants, share-croppers and landless agricultural labourers in the Dhanusha and Nuwakot Districts to raise their income and general living standards over a period of three years.

Four Group Organizers/Action Research Fellows (GO/ARFs), two in each project area, are working on a full-time basis. Two of these are bank personnel and the other two have been seconded to the project from the Agriculture Department. The GO/ARFs are responsible for organizing groups of small farmers and landless agricultural labourers. They are not expected to duplicate the functions of other governmental departments

but to act as links between the different departments and the farmers' groups. The GO/ARFs are also encouraged to conduct action - research to throw light on the nature and practicability of grassroots institutions, the procedures and regulations regarding lending and repayment of loans to small farmers and landless agricultural labourers, and, in general, the problems of small farmers and suitable solutions.

A grant of \$ 20,000 from FAO/UNDP has served as a guarantee-cum-risk fund. Using this, the ADB has undertaken to extend ten times the amount to the small farmers and landless agricultural labourers without requiring collateral. In both the areas, the cumulative loan disbursements have amounted to about 1.6 million rupees and have been given to some 72 groups that have been organized in the last two years.

A Closer Look at the Project in Nuwakot

The total population of the two Panchayats, Tupche and Karki Man Kamna, in which this project is operating is 9,000 - some 1,580 households in all. Two-thirds own less than 0.4 hectare of land. About 90 percent belong to the category of small farmers, while twenty-four households have no land at all. Barely a quarter of the land is irrigated.

The GO/ARF who is in charge of the Nuwakot SFDP is a tall, lanky man, 40 years old. His name is Chandra Kant Adhikari. He has been working here single-handed until recently, when he was joined by an Assistant Group Organizer, Chandra Kantji ('ji' is an honorific denoting respect) has been in service for the past twenty years. He started work as an extension worker, gradually coming to be an Agricultural Development Officer for a district, and is now seconded from the Department of Agriculture to the project.

Chandra Kantji's simplicity and ability to understand peasants and establish an excellent rapport with them is perhaps due to his own rural background. He comes from a poor rural family that owns about half a hectare of land. Because there was no school in his village he once walked for seven days to go to Katmandu to join a school. The family could not afford to send him to a college so he underwent a year's training in agriculture extension and began his working life as an extension agent. Having lived in poverty himself, Chandra Kantji not only understands the peasants but also identifies with their lot.

The first thing Chandra Kantji did was to conduct a household survey of the two Panchayats. Through this he got to know the people and their problems. He soon found out that the small farmers in Tupche faced similar problems as small farmers anywhere else. They had little land, and that little was not very fertile. In the absence of irrigation facilities the peasants depended entirely on the rains. They had almost no access to inputs of any kind. Not only were these out of reach, but so also were the government personnel who could have provided them. The terms and conditions of getting loans from banks and the procedures involved were so cumbersome that they had never even come near obtaining a loan from a bank. Consequently they had been entirely at the mercy of money lenders for both consumption and production loans. The rate of interest they had to pay was anything between 50 to 100 percent a year!

What the small farmers produced on their land was enough only to feed them for six to eight months. For the rest of the year they had to look for some other way of employing themselves to avoid going hungry. Wages for such employment were very low. This again forced them to borrow money. The vicious circle was complete and almost impossible to break through.

Many of their children did not go to school as they were needed at

home for work. The literacy rate was very low. Medical facilities were available only at the district headquarters, but in any case farmers were too poor to afford buying medicines.

Above all, because of their low economic and social status, small farmers were not sufficiently represented in any local institutions of importance for economic development.

There was no end to the problems. It also became clear to those who were implementing the project that a variety of solutions would be needed to make a multi-sided attack on the farmers' poverty. The people best suited to attack these problems were those whose problems these were, i.e. the small farmers themselves, through groups which would give them a common voice and a strength of their own.

The First Few Steps were the Toughest

The initial cautious attitude of the peasants toward the project was described by one of their group leaders:

"When Adhikariji came to us for the first time we were rather doubtful. We weren't quite sure how these groups would work. We were afraid to take loans from the Government, thinking it would get us into unnecessary trouble. But we decided to give the idea a try, anyway."

Once the first few groups were in fact organized, the idea lost much of its original vagueness. Small groups of 7 to 20 persons, all small and marginal farmers, came to be formed around an economic activity. With the help of the GO/ARF the groups began to formulate production plans and to apply for loans from the local branch of the Agricultural Development Bank through the local cooperative society. Because of group guarantee the small farmers and landless peasants were not required to furnish any collateral to become entitled to receiving loans. As the group had to take joint responsibility for the repayment of loans, both small farmers and even landless peasants were able to get production loans from the bank.

Some Statistics About the Groups

There are now 37 groups in Tupche with 658 members. This constitutes just forty percent of the small farmers in the project area. Among the members are 88 women who have been organized into 7 sub-groups. Among the member farmers organized into groups, some eighty percent possess 2-8 ropanies of land (20 ropanies=1 hectare) and the rest have between one and two ropanies or are without land. Loans amounting to 1.78 million rupees have been disbursed for short, medium and long-term income-raising activities. Of this 172,000 rupees has already been repaid. In repayment the small farmers have proved to be better borrowers than the rich farmers, whose default rates are quite high.

Experience has shown that, through discussions and consensus, the groups have been able to identify and plan viable projects which have been acceptable to the banks. The different activities for which loans have been taken out are as follows:

<u>activity</u>	<u>% of total loan</u>
buffaloes	60
goats	16
crop production	9

oxen	6.5
sheep	4
handlooms	3
fruit farming	1
pigs and poultry	0.5

Joint Production Activities

Encouraged by the achievements of group action with regard to getting loans, some groups have even started on certain joint production activities. For example all the 25 members of one group have taken a joint loan of 7,000 rupees to start a common poultry venture. To house the birds the group members have jointly constructed a shed on a piece of land bought by the group out of group savings. A young boy, the son of a group member, has been employed on a salary of 100 rupees a month to take care of it.

Two enterprising members of the same group have started a rice mill with a loan of 15,000 rupees from the bank. This is the first rice mill in the nearby area and perhaps the first one to be owned by such small farmers. And one of the two owners has already become a self-taught mechanic.

Another group, all the members of which belong to the Tamang tribe, has recently started a joint goat-rearing project. The families share the responsibility of looking after the goats. Making a common shed for the goats is the next item on the long list of future activities the group has planned for itself.

Members of another group told us that they had decided to start a community orchard. They bought some land next to a piece of barren land and gradually occupied also the latter to extend their orchard to an area of 1.5 acres. The bigger farmers of the area wanted to discourage this "audacity". "But due to our group strength they were not able to disturb us", was the proud boast of one of the members. A landless person has now been employed on a monthly salary of 100 rupees to manage the orchard. The group members had at their finger tips all the facts and figures about the fruit trees in their orchard. This was something quite remarkable in terms of collective effort and joint responsibility.

We discovered that women had started joint weaving activities in a number of groups, and they even sold the cloth jointly. Moreover, the construction and running of fishponds, small-scale irrigation systems and communal afforestation is also being done by some other groups.

The plans for future joint ventures were more ambitious and at the same time not less realistic.

Production Loans are Fine, But How to take Care of Immediate Needs ?

The poverty of small farmers and landless people has been so acute here that they have not been able to survive without taking loans for food, medicines, child-birth, marriage, death, etc. Whereas production loans take care of their future, the consumption loans are what ensures their survival on the one hand and their continued exploitation by the money lenders on the other.

Not exactly happy to see their small permanent clients, the poor peasants, getting stronger through group action and getting access to institutionalized credit for their income-raising activities, the money lenders tried to teach the small farmers a lesson by refusing to extend them loans for emergencies and immediate needs. As banks do not usually provide such loans the money lenders hoped to break the unity of the small farmers.

The way out of the dilemma proved to be "group saving". Each group decided to organize its own saving fund into which each member was expected to deposit a fixed amount every month. Out of this fund the group then started giving loans for consumption, medicines, death, marriage, etc. As money earns money, the funds started growing. Now the groups even give loans for production purposes out of their own saving funds. In all, the 37 groups now have about 20,000 rupees as savings.

How much money is to be deposited every month? Who is to receive how much loan, for what purpose, at what rate of interest? All these questions are decided by the group members.

Members feel that the saving funds have not only helped them to meet their immediate needs but have also helped to further more unity amongst them. "Moreover, consumption loans for us are production loans. How can we produce if we do not eat?", was how one wise peasant put it.

Not by Economics Alone

Although the groups started as loan facilitators, they soon took on responsibility for other income-raising activities as well as for other activities to promote the education, health, hygiene of their members. The kind and number of activities undertaken by the groups are constantly increasing.

In fact, through the formation of small groups not only is the economic status of the small farmers improving but also their social and political status. The "receiving mechanisms" of the small farmers are being created and strengthened. On the basis of their group strength the peasants are gradually coming out of their so-called "culture of silence". They have a group voice now to demand various services from the different agencies and local institutions. And they are becoming members of local cooperatives in ever-increasing numbers. Already as a result of group action 45 small farmers have been elected to local Panchayat bodies. Slowly but surely all this is increasing the strength of the poorer peasants vis-a-vis the big landholders and money lenders.

In the frequent meetings which take place in this area now between people of the various government departments, FAO and the small farmers, there are certain changes that have become distinctly noticeable. No longer do the small farmers and landless peasants just sit passively round the edges of meetings. They are very much in the centre of things now, participating in meetings actively and confidently. And no longer are they as afraid, as they used to be, to air their views before government officers. They even reel out statistics about their groups without faltering and without the aid of written reports.

As they put it in their own words: "Because we are a group now and we stick to each other we have suddenly become more powerful. The money lenders are afraid to exploit us now. The government officials speak to us, they even speak nicely. We are also no more afraid to enter the bank or the office of the cooperative society."

One of the peasants said: "We used to be like frightened mice. At

the sight of a better-off person (a cat) we used to run away. After the formation of our groups we feel like cats ourselves. We don't run away when we see another cat."

The SFDP has given these peasants hopes of a better future; a new basis for dreaming of a better life. Half in jest and half in earnest a peasant said: "May be now some of our wishes can come true. I, for one, wish that my second son should one day eat rice from a plate in the middle storey of my house."

Group Problems in Tupche

However, it would be wrong to get the impression that it has been smooth sailing for all the groups. There have been problems. One of them has been reluctance on the part of some members to respect group liability. They want to enjoy the benefits of group action without maintaining group discipline. In some cases discussion was enough to deal with such cases. In others, group pressure had to be applied on some members in order to avoid the group breaking up as a result of lack of discipline or default in loan repayment.

Another problem has been that the burden of group work has sometimes fallen too much on the group leaders. This has led to a certain amount of tension in the groups. Problems such as this have been remedied through discussion and a better division of responsibility within the groups.

There have also been instances of money lenders trying to disturb the groups indirectly. So the peasants have had to be constantly on their guard to fend off such threats and overcome problems as and when they have arisen.

Gradually these different groups are moving toward the formation of a larger association of small farmers' groups. Such an association, while further increasing the strength of the small farmers, could also take on more responsibilities and provide even more services to the groups.

Also on the cards is the setting up of a modest training centre at Tupche to facilitate and provide different kinds of training to group members and group leaders. The training would be in animal husbandry, poultry, handloom operation, first aid, simple accounting, leadership, social dynamics and other social skills related to group work and organizations.

Why is Group Formation Catching on

It may well be asked what is it that makes the project function so well in terms of helping the poor? Especially in view of so many past failures of programmes such as these. The main reasons would appear to be the following:

1. "The village" has not been seen in this project as a homogenous whole. It was decided to include only the small farmers in the project, in spite of pressures from the better-off sections to "gate-crash", this decision has been strictly enforced. Thus there are no divergent class interests within the groups.
2. The groups have been deliberately kept small, making intensive and open discussion possible between the members on a basis of equality.
3. Programmes have not been imposed from above. The group members decide which activities they want to start first and they plan these with

help from the GO/ARF. Because of this planning from below the group plans have been realistic and based on need.

4. Group leaders are not nominated, but elected by the members.

5. Unity and cohesion in the groups has been built up through specific functions like repaying loans, managing the saving fund and regular monthly meetings.

6. Continuous guidance and support from the GO/ARF and other government departments has been provided.

7. Another positive factor has been the support and continuous guidance given to the project by the Sub-Project Implementation Committee, the National Coordinating Committee and by the Small Farmer Development Unit of FAO's Regional Office in Bangkok. Along with action at the field level, constant reflection and analysis has been carried out at these different levels jointly as well as separately.

Participatory Evaluation

Evaluation has been built into the project right from the start. In the two annual evaluation workshops, held in 1977 and 1978, a participatory methodology of evaluation was used. The small farmers were as active in these/evaluation sessions as they have been in running their groups.

The evaluation workshops came up with suggestions not only for the field action projects but also for policy-makers and planners.

Similarly, at a national workshop on the "Two-way process in planning", (another ripple caused by the project), in March this year, attention was focussed on the planning process and how it could be improved through the participation of the farmers using the experiences of the Small Farmers Development Project.

Besides agreeing on the need for planning from below, there was unanimous agreement in the workshop on the need to expand the SFDP to other parts of the country.

Mutual Learning at the Asian Level

The project is providing food for thought and direction for action not only to people in other parts of Nepal but also to other Asians involved in rural development. The experiences gained have been shared at regional meetings attended by people involved with SFDP work in Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Recently Chandra Kant Adhikari, the GO/ARF of Nuwakot, participated in the second Regional Change Agents Training Programme organized by FAO's FFHC/AD. Ten field workers from government and non-government development projects in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka spent two days at Nuwakot to understand and learn from its experiences in group action. Chandra Kantji then visited the projects of the other ten participants.

Let Expansion not be at the Expense of Quality

Expansion of the project in many more areas of Nepal is what everyone is talking about now. In fact the Agricultural Development Bank has already decided to extend it to fifteen more districts. Successful projects should indeed be multiplied, especially like SFDP, as it is neither expensive nor does it require too many additional personnel or structures.

While expanding, however, the same amount of flexibility and innovation would have to be ensured as there has been in the pilot stage. Ample time would have to be allowed for the projects to take roots in each area. What happened in Tupche can merely be a guide to action, not a set formula to be imposed on other people, in other areas. Like a stream which takes the shape of the area and terrain through which it flows, the new projects will have to be flexible enough to respond to the special needs and character of the people and areas where they are being implemented. It could indeed be a pity if quantitative achievements were to be at the expense of quality, for what is impressive about the existing project is its quality and effectiveness. And there are no better criteria to prove the point than the new-found enthusiasm and high spirits of the peasants of Tupche in Nuwakot.

29 | Three Schools of Rural Reconstruction

a.r. desai

There are numerous individuals and groups who desire and strive for the improvement of the material and cultural life of the rural people.

They can be broadly divided into the following three categories:

- (i) The Philanthropic group;
- (ii) The Reformist group, and
- (iii) The Revolutionary group.

The Philanthropic Group

The Philanthropic group does not view the problem of the material and cultural poverty of the rural people in the context of the institutions and the basic structure of the rural society. It holds the conviction that it is possible to ameliorate the position of the rural people through direct humanitarian effort, without changing those institutions and structure. It evolves economic, educational and other programmes of village uplift which embody such items as creation of charity funds to help the village needy, moral appeals to landlords and such other groups to relax their pressure on peasants, establishment of hospitals and schools and others.

The basic feature of the standpoint and the programmatic approach of this group to the problem lies in the fact that it attempts to improve the conditions of the rural population within the matrix of the existing institutions and structure of the rural society, by means of purely humanitarian endeavour...

The Reformist Group

The Reformist group subscribes to the view that it is the malfunctioning of the existing rural social system and its institutions (and not the social system and its institutions in their basic essence), which is the social-genetic cause of the economic misery and social and cultural backwardness of the rural people. They, therefore, work for a healthy functioning of the social system and its institutions, or, at most, for reforming them. They assert that once this institutional reform is accomplished, it will result in the all-sided betterment of the life of the rural population.

The distinguishing characteristic of the standpoint and the programmatic approach of this group to the problem lies in the fact that for elevating the conditions of rural people at present it does not regard it necessary to replace the existing social system and its institutions

by new ones but strives only to reform them.

The Revolutionary Group

Finally, there is a third group whose standpoint and programmatic approach to the problem are based on a revolutionary conception. They think that the abysmal poverty, crass ignorance, and cultural backwardness of the mass of the rural people are fundamentally due to the existing social system and the institutions which are its organs to sustain that system. The social system and its institutions, they feel, cannot but breed these evils. They declare, therefore, that both the programme of individual aid and relief and that of institutional reform will be unable to achieve the desired end. They contend that no reform can appreciably liberate the rural people from want, disease, illiteracy, and lack of culture. They argue that new wine cannot be filled into the old bottles.

Thus, according to this group, the evils of the rural society are not the result of any malfunctioning of the rural social system or its institutions but are inherent in this system and institutions themselves, are the inevitable product of the natural functioning of the present social order. This group, therefore, evolves and attempts to carry out a programme of a revolutionary transformation of the rural social structure from its economic base upward.

While laying decisive emphasis on its social revolutionary objective, this group includes in its programme a number of items of the first two programmes. It, however, links its struggle to implement those items with the struggle for the change of the entire social system.

These three groups with their diverse and even conflicting programmes are at present struggling for hegemony in the agrarian area.

Rural Reconstruction Programmes, Their Principal Weaknesses

Various individual groups, associations and parties, each according to its own light, are thus engaged in the movement of rural uplift and reconstruction. Among them are individual philanthropists and philanthropic bodies; social, political, religious, economic and educational organizations including welfare associations, missionary groups, governmental institutions and others.

We will make a few observations regarding the work of these groups and organizations.

(1) Exclusive Concentration on One Aspect of the Rural Life

Some of them exclusively concentrate on one single aspect of the rural life like education, economic welfare, sanitation, crusade against reactionary social customs and practices, religious superstition, ethical uplift or fight against disease. They isolate one aspect of the rural life from its other aspects. The organic unity of the rural life and the interrelations and interdependence of its many aspects are thus lost sight of.

This results either in the abortion or limited success of their programme even when dealing with one single aspect of the rural life.

(2) Predominantly Emotional Approach

Most of this groups and organization, while inspired by ethical and humanitarian motives, lack scientific training for the work they undertake. They forget that an objective study of the rural society and its

conditions is vital for evolving a correct programme and methodology of work and that merely good intentions are no guarantee of successful social work. They forget that a patient gathering of factual data pertaining to the life of the rural people and a detailed concrete study of their specific social, economic, political and other conditions are important prerequisites for formulating a correct programme of rural work. A study of the psychological traits, ethnic and communal composition, customs and beliefs of the rural aggregate, is also indispensable for the purpose. Further, these groups and organizations require to have a concrete knowledge of the economic structure of the rural society, the specific system of land tenure prevailing in it, the various socio-economic groups bound up with its economy and with different and even conflicting interests, the religious and other ideologies which have a hold over their mind, the particular types of family and other social institutions existing there and many other things. Such knowledge is necessary because the task before them is not the renovation of a vague and vast rural society, in general, but of a specific type of rural society; not the amelioration of the abstract rural people and crystalized present conditions. It is, therefore, essential to study the particular rural society and its people in concrete details. Then alone, it is possible to evolve an appropriate programme of rural work for the recuperation of a particular rural society and the advance of the specific rural aggregate living in that society. Then alone, also, it is possible to locate the specific social economic, psychological, ideological and other obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of that programme. A rural aggregate in Gujarat is different from that in Saurashtra, Bihar or Maharashtra.

Many individuals and organizations oriented to the work of rural reconstruction and uplift lack this understanding. They evolve naive programmes of rural work which, not being based on concrete detailed knowledge of the specific rural society and its people, fail or meet with partial success. This breeds the sentiment of defeatism among them and results sometimes in their abandoning of the rural work altogether.

(3) Lack of Co-ordination of Work

Lack of co-ordination of activities in various spheres marks the work of some organizations and groups. Further, their activities are often based on conflicting value systems.

This, too, is detrimental to the success of the programme. It is obvious that all activities should be co-ordinated and should constitute a single organic stream of total work. Also it is evident that a single principle must determine and permeate the diverse activities in diverse fields. Otherwise there will ensue mutual negating of activities.

(4) Insufficient Ability to Assess the Results

Some groups and organizations exhibit insufficient ability for a proper assessment of the results of their efforts in various domains of rural work. Since they have, therefore, no adequate conception of the cumulative result of their activities, they get a hazy notion regarding their advance towards their objective. Inability to properly evaluate their work in terms of productivity also denies them that power of self-criticism which is also vital for a correct planning of next stages of work.

When work is not properly planned and correctly assessed, there is also the danger of deviating from the correct road to the goal.

Sporadic and unplanned forms of rural welfare work are also sometimes launched. In a number of instances, they degenerate into mere fads. This reveals unconscious lack of earnestness or absence of scientific understanding of the problem on the part of their sponsors. We find a mushroom growth of such efforts embarked upon by individuals and even institutions in the rural area. This tends to make the picture of the rural reconstruction work chaotic to some extent, and often leads the rural people to become victims rather than beneficiaries of such endeavours since they yield unstable and distorted results.

(5) Absence of Proper Sociological Perspective

The principal weakness characterizing these organizations however, generally lies in their lack of proper sociological understanding of the problem of rural reconstruction. To evolve a successful programme of rural reconstruction at a higher level, it is quite necessary to know the law governing the development of the rural society, the structure, the functioning and the objective tendencies of development of the existing rural society; the interconnections and the interdependence of various elements of that society (technical, economic, social, political, ideological); and the relative significance of those elements in determining the life of the rural society and their respective role in the total social change; require to be comprehended.

To change society consciously, we must have a science of society. Rural sociology is the science of rural society. The law of the structure and development of rural society in general can aid us in discovering the special laws governing a particular rural society. Without the science of rural society, it is not, therefore, possible to get an authentic picture of a particular rural society. Rural sociology alone can provide a correct, organic, synthetic and multi-sided knowledge of a specific rural society and the tendency of its further evolution.

Rural Sociology, an Indispensable Guide

Rural sociology will help the rural worker to make a correct diagnosis of its ills and will, further, enable him to evolve a correct prescription or programme to overcome those ills. If the diagnosis of the ills is erroneous or imperfect, the prescription itself will be unscientific and therefore futile. The uninformed rural worker will adopt unhistorical and inappropriate means to cure the defects and deficiencies of the rural social organisms. The social ills may have a deep-seated cause in the very social system itself and may be merely symptoms proclaiming the general disease of the social organism. Not knowing this, the rural worker will engage himself in a symptomatic treatment of the social ills which as all physicians know, gives no relief or gives only a partial and temporary relief.

There is another grave danger for a rural worker who is ignorant of rural sociology. The present social evils are the features of the present society and therefore cannot be overcome by methods adopted to cure the social evils of bygone societies. For instance, solutions of the evils of self-sufficient society would not be adequate for the solution of the maladies of the present competitive commodity society. If the rural worker is unaware of this fact, he will attempt to graft the former on the present society. He will recommend the resuscitation of the techniques, political systems or ethical concepts of the past societies to overcome the crisis of the present one. Such a view is unscientific. The evils of the present rural society arise out of its own inner structure and can be cured by means determined by its own trend of development.

The programme of rural reconstruction should be derived from a strict sociological analysis of the actual conditions and tendencies of the actually existing rural society and evaluation of the actual forces at work within it.

Here comes the decisive creative role of rural sociology which is as indispensable for the purpose of rural reconstruction as the science of medicine is to a medical practitioner.



SECTION - V

EDUCATION INTERACTION AND TRAINING

30 | The Workshop as a Moment in a Process of Political Education

What is a workshop? Can learning take place in it? Can working method be acquired through it? Can a few days spent together in a workshop constitute a liberating experience for the participants?

Our own experience with workshops has shown that in order to answer these apparently simple questions, it is necessary to consider the basic concepts of education, learning, and knowledge. It is also necessary to examine the relationship which exists between teacher and student, school and society, theory and practice, awareness and active transformation of reality.

We can say that we see the workshop as a moment and a framework in which each participant is invited to examine critically his or her past and present practice while, at the same time, preparing to return to action.

Obviously, a workshop or seminar so conceived cannot exist isolated in time or space. A workshop would be meaningless if the actual work were to begin only when the participants assembled to discuss a list of topics-or if it were to end after the drawing up of conclusions on the last day of the meeting. A workshop, conceived as a theoretical context, within which critical thought is given to past and present action, and which is oriented toward a renewal of that action, can never be isolated nor abstract. Action must be the beginning point of the workshop's dynamic movement. That action, (the experience of the participants), is clarified and enlarged by reflection. The reflection then sends one back to new action, enriched by the analysis which the workshop made possible. The new action makes up, at the same time, the test of the reflection, (or theoretical analysis), and the subject matter for yet another period of reflection.

With this concept of a workshop it becomes useless, if not impossible, to set up a framework of discussion by selecting topics of debate before hand or by adopting a rigid form. Instead of giving a pre-determined program to the participants the subject matter of the workshop depends on the analysis that each participant is invited to make of his or her own experiences and concrete problems. In this way, the problems discussed in the workshop are not arbitrary, abstract, or divorced from the life of the participants. On the contrary, they arise from concrete reality and daily experience. The workshop's aim, then, is to identify real problems and, on the basis of a systematic comparison and examination or personal experiences, to understand how, (descriptive), and why, (interpretation), there has been success, failure, or difficulty. The reflection's product, then, is a series of practical indications and guidelines which can be applied directly to the concrete actions of the participants.

This view of a workshop, (as a theoretical context developed on a base of practical experience), rests on two fundamental premises:

- the first is the rejection of an authoritarian or hierarchical relationship between the all-powerful teacher and the ignorant student—a relationship which is always linked to seeing education as the transmission of a packaged knowledge. In fact, such a view makes education similar to banking in that the student's head is supposed to be filled by the teacher's knowledge in the same way that money is deposited in a bank. One who holds such a "banking" concept of education considers knowledge to be some sort of end-product to be transmitted from the person who knows to those who do not. In our societies, school is the depository of a dead knowledge that has been accumulated during the past centuries. School holds a monopoly on the transmission of this supposed "knowledge", which is given through precise and well defined rites, under the supervision of the teachers. "Banking" education, is nothing more than the storing of facts, events, precepts, or information, and the information is most often related to fragmentary questions, techniques, or partialities or broad problems which are never seen in a totality. This results in a paradoxical situation where the acquisition of the "learner" of an over-growing mass of information, or of extremely specialized skills, goes hand in hand with the progressive stifling of a critical consciousness--(which we define as the capacity to understand one's environment and to see one's place within that social context). It is obviously a critical consciousness and not the pre-packaged "knowledge" of the school system which enables one to intervene creatively and consciously on one's environment.
- the second premise is the rejection of another basic premise of "banking" education—namely a separation between theory and practice, study and action. When "knowledge" becomes a product which belongs to an official institution called the "school", then school becomes an entity separated from the society, and the content of its "education" in no way relates to the concrete and immediate reality that confronts the "learners". In this "knowledge factory", daily life is not considered to be a starting point or a source for the learning process or learning experience. On the contrary, by teaching abstract theories and techniques, the school programmes the student to play a social role which he or she will be given by society. Creativity is replaced by adaptation and conditioning; conformism is preferred over critical evaluation. Discipline, competition and dependence are stressed over solidarity or self-determination. The schools selectively favour and reward a minority while marginalising the majority.

The idea of workshops, as we conceive them, is in direct conflict with the presuppositions of "banking" education, that is, with an authoritarian and hierarchical teacher-student relationship, with a transmission of a packaged knowledge to a passive student, and with a dichotomy between what is taught and the actual reality of those who are supposed to be learning. We would like to emphasize that our rejection of these educational relationships is not gratuitous or simplistic. That rejection is a necessary consequence of our basic educational premises.

At the moment when the "raw material" of a workshop is no longer chosen or developed abstractly, but is derived from the questions which the participants ask themselves about their concrete actions and concerns, two things happen:

- correct answers and pre-established theories, capable of bringing immediate solutions to the problems, no longer exist.
- everything remains to be invented or created by the participants, everyone contributing his or her own experience alongwith the lessons received from that experience. This basic material is carefully examined and discussed, then elaborated into conclusions-or further questions-acceptable to the entire group.

Such dynamics take us far beyond the static knowledge imparted by an institutionalized school. By basing a workshop on the experience of the participants, the knowledge or learning that comes from the systematic confrontation of experience and the interpretation of that experience, can only result in an expanding, unfinished, and non-transmittable knowledge. That knowledge can be acquired and reacquired everyday as the process of decoding and transforming reality continues.

"Literacy is not the ability to read and write a linguistic code, it is the ability to read, (understand), and write, (transform), one's own reality."

Naturally, a workshop with this format, and with these presuppositions behind it, necessitates a structure and a work method which are compatible with such objectives.

We come to the crucial question of the role of the coordinator of the workshop and his or her relationship to the group. The very existence of a coordinator, (one given the responsibility of "conducting" the workshop), is often considered to be contradictory with the aims of any real process of political education, that is to say, with a process in which the participants acquire a critical consciousness and proceed to change themselves from mere objects to conscious, acting subjects of their own future.

Does the presence of a coordinator prevent the group from becoming creative and self-determining? Does the coordinator's presence cause dependency? Is the coordinator the person "designated" to bring the group to a greater "awareness", as if "awareness" or consciousness" were something that could be transmitted, (as packaged knowledge is transmitted in the schools)?

It is difficult to give categorical answers to these questions. One can only try to understand why a coordinator seems necessary or why we feel that it is difficult for a group to engage spontaneously in the dynamics of action/reflection. This will become clearer as we explain under what conditions we view the coordinator's presence and participation as positive.

The discussion of the role of the coordinator within the workshop is comparable to the analysis of the relationship between the militant observer and the social group with which he or she sorks, (This analysis served as the theoretical framework for IDAC Document Number 3). We refer the reader to that document and we shall limit ourselves here to pointing out the two dimensions which, in our opinion, justify the coordinator's participation:

- First of all, the coordinator must simply insure the existence of the context or framework within which the workshop participants are invited to make a critical appraisal of their experiences. Very concretely, the first part of our seminars consists in inviting each participant to present himself or herself, explaining his or her daily practice, and identifying

the problems, questions, concerns, and contradictions which he or she would like to discuss during the workshop.

secondly, the coordinator must invite the group to go beyond a simple description of the problems, since the descriptions often deal with only the external or surface manifestations of more complex realities. Simple description, rather than profound analysis, is the consequence of the conditioning which we receive in institutionalized schools and the fact that every oppressed group inevitably interiorizes the dominant ideology of the society in which it lives. As a result, we describe rather than interpret, and we often struggle with problems which are of minor importance, and we attack consequences rather than causes.

Hence, the coordinator's task is, 1.) to create the proper conditions for reflection, 2.) to invite the group to understand and interpret its own reality, 3.) to try to open a possibility for reflection, not only on the consequences, but also on the causes of their problems, and 4.) to invite the participants to relate each partial and specific phenomenon to the total reality of which they are a part. This is a multi-dimensional effort of integrating separate elements into a whole and relating consequence to cause.

That does not mean that the coordinator already possesses the real "consciousness" or "knowledge" which can be brought to the group from the outside. On the contrary, the coordinator's main role is to gather the elements which already exist in the group in a nonorganized form and to re-submit those same elements in an organized manner for the group's consideration.

More important still, is the fact that this constant interchange, during the whole course of the workshop, between raw data drawn from experience and theoretical formulation and restructuring of the data, allows each person to acquire a work method, a way of seeing and understanding what really exists and happens in their lives. The use of such a work method progressively diminishes the importance and necessity of a coordinator. It also coincides with the development of an authentic, critical consciousness by the workshop participants. In this sense, a workshop will become more successful as the role of the coordinator is diminished. The eventual disappearance of a coordinator's role indicates that the group has reached a level of self-determination and that it is free from dependence.

The care with which the coordinator seeks to help the participants become aware of interactions and dynamics within the workshop is another essential factor in the attainment of self-determination. The transformation of an experience, (an experience which is being lived in the workshop), into an object of study, enables the group to see the part played by the coordinator, to grasp the work method being applied, and, if necessary, to question that method. Obviously, such questioning would not be permitted by a coordinator who tried to manipulate the group. Such self-analysis is also one of the best means of identifying and overcoming inhibitions and tensions in the group. Questioning and evaluating the work method which is being employed is another way in which theory and practice are brought together into one integral process: the experience being lived is turned into an object of reflection for the participants.

In this manner, the unity between subject-- the workshop participant --and object-- the process of the workshop--becomes clear, and the correction or redefinition of the experience becomes possible while the experience is happening.

Finally, one must be aware that the depth and precision of the workshop process, which we have outlined in general terms here, depends on many factors. We can cite the following as criteria that we have found important: the length and continuity of the work, the homogeneity of the group, the degree to which the coordinator is able to identify with the problems experienced by the participants.. It is obvious that a coordinator who shares the problems and the socio-cultural background of the participants can more easily take part in examining the problem.

We feel that in a workshop which lasts only a few days one can only initiate some dynamics. However, even in such a limited setting, the group can bring into focus some important and basic problems. These can be, indeed, must be, developed more fully at a later time or in another setting.

31 | Notes From A "Shibir" A Camp Organised by "Bhoomi Sena"

harsh sethi

The "Shibir" was to include representatives of 30 villages. Eight "Bhoomi Sena" (A tribal organisation) cadres spent 15-20 days, going to each of these villages, discussed village problems with the people, informed them about the work of Bhoomi Sena, etc. In this manner the word was spread.

Most of these meetings were mass meetings where 200/300 adivasis attended. Entry was no problem-because the cadres were all adivasis themselves. Familiarity with the area, and the existence of relatives, made the job much easier. Through all this discussion it was decided that each village would send 2 to 3 representatives to the meeting depending on its size. About 40 people were expected.

Twenty-four villages out of thirty participated-from distances of over 15 miles; 48-50 adivasis came.

The first day-a cadre gave a brief history of the organisation, its successes and failures/how they grew from 1970 to 1977, etc.

In the second session-each "delegate" from every village spoke. The story was the story both of the individual as well as the village. They told the stories of their exploitation. Everyone spoke.

On the basis of the "emerging appreciation" of reality-spontaneous clustering took place, based on "problem perception". Some key problems emerged, which would be the basic discussion issues. Though village to village problems were different-the reality now contained an appreciation of 24 villages- a much larger universe had emerged.

The problems agreed on were:

1. Why are we poor?
2. Relations between a sawkar (money lender) and the government.
3. The relations between small farmers and landless labourers.
How are they one?
4. What are the Tarun Mandals (peoples committees) and how can they tackle the problems?
5. What has the "Sarkar" (government) done? Employment guarantee scheme, minimum wages, bonded labor, etc.

Through mutual discussions, the class-analysis of the area took

place- the categories presented were:

1. Those who live only on their labor power-laborers.
2. Those who have some land, but also sell their labor power-poor peasant.
3. Those who have land, and neither sell nor buy labor power-middle peasant.
4. Those who have land-and do no personal work on the land- They also have moneylending and trading activities -sawkar.

It was also decided that the sawkar was the oppressor, while the first three were the oppressed.

Babu had borrowed 7 maunds of paddy as consumption loan. His total production from his two acre plot of land was 44 maunds. Out of this he paid 28 maunds as principal plus interest to the sawkar (at the rate of 400% interest) within 6 months. He was left with 16 mounds only, to sustain himself and his family till the next season, when he would have to go again to the sawkar for a consumption loan.

Kalu was a bonded laborer. He had borrowed Rs.650/- six years back. In return, against a minimum wage of Rs.3/- per day, he was paid a daily wage of only one rupee (i.e. Rs.4380/- over 6 years as principal plus interest). The quantum, the method, the form of exploitation; who the exploiter was; the process of gradual weakening-were all "discovered".

Through these individual stories, it was realised that for both the poor peasant and the landless laborer, the enemy was the same, and the suffering was common. It was also analysed that the sawkar became strong only by exploiting "our" weakness. Further, it was discovered that the laborer is not exploited only once, but through the wage, interest, and tradings. This experience recounting led the entire group to calculate how much they had paid to the moneylending class over the years, and with this the collective perception of a common enemy gained strength.

An example of their analysis/perception:

How are the landless laborer and small farmer one?

"Though both the small farmer and the landlord have land-their connection is one of exploiter-exploited. It is a "weakening link". Both the small farmers and landless laborers work and get exploited for wage-and this mutual exploited status brings them together".

It was also revealed to the adivasis, through their own stories and words, that the "differential speed and direction" in which the government reacts in an adivasi-sawkar struggle, proves that it is sawkar's government.

Slowly through such stories of the police terror, the tehsildars, the firings by sawkars etc.- a picture of their reality emerged.

In the last session-where action had to be decided-the cadres initiated the process-but never dominated it. The attempt was to give the maximum assertion to the adivasis.

The major problem which emerged was that of work in the month of May-through the Employment Guarantee Scheme. It was decided not only that

work was required-but it was also defined that the work should-

- a) be for as long a period as possible;
- b) should not help the sawkar.

(There was no appreciation yet of a positive quality- i.e. work that will help the adivasis).

Work areas would be decided upon by discussion in each of the 30 villages-keeping in mind the criterion laid down.

A joint meeting was then convened and a delegation met the Tehsildar and got their application processed.

About 20 Tarun Mandals' sprang up in the area whose role would be to see that the "work" got done. This entire area participated in the minimum wages struggle and the politicisation is such that a meeting of 800 people can be called within 4 hours.

(In the entire 3 day meeting, the maximum speaking was done by the adivasis. The organisational cadres merely initiated the discussion and sometimes attempted to give it a direction. The outsiders kept completely quiet.)

Examples can be multiplied to show the growth in political awareness over the last 2 years. There is a very clear understanding of "who is our enemy, and who is our friend", and the variations in this in different situations viz. they understood that contradictions develop during a minimum wages struggle between the small farmers and the landless laborers. The method followed is also clear how we build up to the whole from the fragmented bits. In fact, through a participatory and dialogic approach a relationship was built up-

- i) Between the Individual and the Structure.
 - ii) Between the Individual and All oppressed.
 - iii) , Between All oppressed and the Structure.
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2 | The Role and Training of Change Agents

kamla bhasin

I have divided the subject of the Role and Training of Change Agents into 4 parts:

1. In the first part I have tried to put the role of change agents in the perspective and context of the concepts of development, communication and community organization.
2. The second part deals with the kinds of change agents and the different levels at which they can and do operate.
3. In the third part I shall deal specifically with the role of change agents who operate at the local or community level.
4. The fourth part deals with the kind of training required for Change Agents operating at the local level.

1. In our discussions we have been saying that development cannot be viewed simply as a process of economic growth and adjustment. Development is a dynamic and integrated process of change involving economic, social, political, cultural and ethical factors, leading to a just society.

We have also said that development cannot remain the sole prerogative and responsibility of only a few elites in our societies. It is a process which demands the active and conscious participation of all the people to transform the present structure of society. Participation of people in this process which demands the active and conscious participation of all the people to transform the present structure of society. Participation of people in this process will stem from a critical awareness of individual and group situations and of development issues in general.

I find it is this process of critical awareness which is the basis for any change and we have emphasized this in relation to education for development, communication and community organisation. This process if critical awareness has to start at different levels of society to bring about all the fundamental changes which are not only desirable but also necessary in our present day systems of education, communication, and other social, economic and political structures.

At various points we have also emphasized the need for mass action as the vehicle of change from below.

Those who start the process of critical awareness and generate

peoples' action are what we shall call change agents. It is these change agents who take on the task of initiating, at different levels, the changes required to transform the present structure of society and to lead to development.

2. The Different Levels at Which Change Agents Operate and the Different Types of Change Agents

During our discussions we have said that attempts to transform the system have to be carried out within the system as well as outside the system. We have also said that the process of reflection and rethinking has to start at different levels although the main emphasis has to be on initiating change at the local community level, because it is the organization of the poor and oppressed people which will be the driving force of all changes. We feel that anybody who believes that the power has to be transferred to the masses, and who works towards this end is a change agent. This person may be a full time community organiser, a development journalist, a bureaucrat trying to change the system from within or religious leader preparing the people for a transformation of society.

- (2.1) At the level of the local community the change agent can be either a member of that community itself or someone from outside who comes and starts working there with the people to start the process of change through conscientization.
- (2.2) There are change agents working in voluntary organisations at the district or national level providing support to the field based change agents.
- (2.3) At the district and national levels are also people who are in the government or working as journalists for the existing media or doing some other work, to earn their living but who identify themselves with the aspirations of the people and also support the process of social, political and economic change in some way or the other.
- (2.4) At the international level there are people working in non-governmental organisations to change the system at that level. They initiate debates on international systems of exploitation, neo-imperialism, and lobby for changes in policy. They also sometimes raise funds and support activities at the local and national level.
- (2.6) There are change agents also in the official international organisations and the international press who fight for changes in different ways.

Examples of all these different kinds of change agents operating at different levels can be found in our group here. What is necessary is that through constant dialogue and reflection all these change agents have to evolve a concept of development with which they all agree. It is a common ideology which has to link them together and provide force and momentum to their efforts. In the absence of common ideology these change agents often work at cross-purposes, hampering the process of change rather than helping it.

3. The Role of Change Agents at the Community Level

As stated earlier, the community level change agent i.e. the person

who sets in motion some reflection on problems, followed by action to tackle the problems, can be from the community itself or someone from outside, who identifies himself/herself with the people he/she goes to live and work with. From within the community there can be somebody who has been living there, has not been to any university or college and who starts reflecting on certain problems and later on involves others in this reflection. Or there could be somebody who is from the village but who has been exposed to outside influences, either in an educational institution or elsewhere. If such persons who have studied in a city want to come back to their villages to start the process of conscientization, even they have to reestablish their bonafides and have to be accepted by the people just as anybody new from outside has to do. This is so, because the education they undergo and their physical absence from the village often leads to alienation.

The change agent not belonging to the community he/she wants to work with has also to be accepted by the people before he/she can work with them. In fact the first step towards being accepted by the people is shedding of suspicions by the people about the motives of this person to come and live with them. On the basis of their past experience the poor people always suspect someone educated, well-fed and well clothed coming to them to 'help' them. People have experienced that it is precisely these kinds of persons who have been exploiting them in the name of religion, welfare, business, elections, etc. Who knows that this visit and all this talk of change, identification etc, might be yet another way of exploiting them? It is only by living with them, establishing contacts and friendships with them and through his/her actions can the outside change agent be gradually accepted as an honest and well meaning person who has no ulterior motives. Even those change agents who emerge from the people have to be accepted by the people as change agents or leaders. Because it is not seldom that people from the same community have exploited the faith and power people have vested in them. The process of being accepted by the people might be little longer for a new person coming from outside, but it is basically the same process, for all kinds of change agents.

The change agents have to get integrated with the people. They have to become one of them, by living with them. Long distance operation of organising people does not work.

In accordance with the concept of development we have spelt out, the change agent has to work with the people and not for the people, and has to identify himself/herself with the oppressed, being aware, however, that identity simply for identity's sake must be avoided. The role change agents have to play will depend on the specific situation and it will constantly change. The role has to be flexible and constantly re-defined.

- (3.1) To initiate the process of critical awareness (conscientization) at the community level is the main role of change agent. He/she has to start a dialogue on the realities of the community situation and confront the community and himself/herself to the contradictions existing in the society. Through this process of conscientization, the change agent will also constantly learn more and be exposed to new situations and constantly review his/her own ideology.

The change agent has to see to it that people identify and define their own needs. He/she can set the dialogue on these issues in motion but he/she cannot identify the problems for the people, even if he/she feels that he/she has understood the situation. Economy of time or effort should be no argument for the change agent to impose his/her own

views and ideologies on the people. The process of reaching at a common ideology by identifying one's own problems and finding solutions for them is also extremely important. The pace of the people's movement has to be determined by the people and not by the change agent.

In this context it becomes necessary to say that the change agent has to listen more than talk, learn more than teach and facilitate more than lead.

- (3.2) The change agent can give the first impetus to start people's organization where that impetus is not there or he/she can support the efforts already existing in a community to organize themselves. The change agent has to emphasize that more and more people participate in discussions, that some groups among the community are not conspicuous by their absence. For example, in some communities the women might be left out or might remain outside such efforts to discuss and organize. In such cases the change agent must initiate a discussion on this very issue before going on to other issues. Increased and continuous participation of people has to be regarded not just as a means of achieving certain ends, but also as an end in itself. Because it is the participation of people which will act as an internal safeguard against new oppressive vested interests which might emerge from inside the movements. The change agent has to realise that genuine people's organisations and movements have to start as people's movement, i.e. it is the people themselves who have to be made the driving force of a movement right from the beginning. In fact it cannot be otherwise. Activity led by outsiders and sustained by them might appear to have some force for some time, but very soon one would find out that it was a deceptive appearance. People's movements have also to remain as people's movements if they are to achieve anything. A handful of active people can lead, can help in organizing but they cannot be the movement.
- (3.3) Another important role which the change agent can play on the basis of his/her knowledge of macro issues, is to provide a link between their struggle on a particular issue and the larger struggle for transforming the system. The change agent can provide the wider perspective of larger issues with which the immediate issue is almost always inextricably linked. These links providing a wider dimension to the struggle will also avoid the danger of the organization getting isolated, crashed or coopted.
- (3.4) The change agent can also act as a link between the community he or she is working with and other individuals, communities and organisations. Through such contacts specialised services and/or resources if required to support the movement or to facilitate the process of economic development can be made available. Here again it should be the people who decide whether they want any outside help or not and in what quantity and on which conditions they are ready to accept it. Outside agencies should only provide support not direct the movement in any way.
- (3.5) The change agent also needs to identify people for cadre formation so that it is a group of people and not just one or two persons who organise. This is necessary so that the

change agent does not remain as the only change agent. Cadre formation will help sustain the movement.

- (3.6) Change agents have to constantly review and assess their behaviour, relationships with others and performance as agents of change. In this reflection and assessment they can be helped by outsiders working elsewhere. It is better to reflect in a group than reflect alone. Such sessions of self examination and questioning are vital to the role of change agents.

4. Training of Change Agents

The importance of training of change agents cannot be overemphasized. To fulfill such an important task one does need to undergo some training. The main question however is what kind of training.

There seems to me to be a dearth of effective programmes of training for workers of social action groups. Most existing training programmes for extension workers or for development workers tend to have the following features:

- there are clear distinctions between those who give and those who receive knowledge; and hardly any participation of the trainees in planning and running the training programme. Certain organisations do use terms like 'dialogical', 'participatory' and 'non-directive' training but the maximum they do about these concepts is to organise lectures on them and thus rob these concepts of any real meaning.

- the lecture method is still the most common way of 'disseminating' knowledge. The higher the position of the person delivering the lecture the less discussion there is. Out of 'respect' for the speaker trainees do not dare to ask questions.

- training in social skills which are concerned with communicating with people and working with them are often neglected or are dealt within an academic rather than in a practical or experimental manner.

- content wise most training programmes avoid dealing with vital questions such as the social, economic and political power structures in a country or an analysis of the causes of poverty and injustice. Hence they fail to make change agents critically aware of the social relations of production in a society or to enthuse them to work for real change in a spirit of solidarity with the down-trodden.

Such training programmes are obviously not suitable for people who are expected to play the role of catalysts or activists or agents of change.

If field level workers are expected to initiate a process of development which is participatory in nature, which also benefits the deprived sections of the community by building strong, and viable groups among them and if they are expected to set in motion a process of critical awareness among communities of their own development situation leading on to self-directed community action for change, then their training has to be such that it equips them for such a role. Such a training process would involve the acquiring of skills to promote relatively intangible objectives like awareness building and the ability to respond to the needs, moods and cultural nuances of local communities.

The emphasis of this kind of training has to be on the following:

- learning of social and human skills, which are necessary for initiating a participatory development process, a process which grows and unfolds itself like a tree, from below upwards;
- analysing in a group major issues and problems faced by rural change agents in their attempts to work with the poorer sections of the population;
- understanding and analysing the connections between rural structures and problems (micro) and national and international policies and structures (macro);
- evaluation of the work, ideas and ideologies of each participant on the basis of case studies and field visits.

The above tasks are to be achieved through sharing of experiences, dialogue, group discussion, sympathetic criticism and self-criticism.

Methodology of Training

During the last three years I have been involved with the organisation and coordination of some training programmes for field level workers from eight Asian countries. Given below are the main features of these training programmes:

It was attempted to involve the participants in identifying their own training needs, in planning and in running the programme because the best way to teach about 'bottom-up planning' 'people's participation' and 'decentralisation of authority' is by practising these ideas.

The emphasis was on self-training and group learning through continuous interaction between participants and on exchange of experiences through group-discussion and actual field visits. This was done on the assumption that by exposing the participants to the realities of rural development in their respective projects, they would be able to:

- identify the issues and problems that confront them as change agents;
- arrive at solutions which are most applicable to their own situations, and
- act these solutions within the framework of their own organisations and the communities in which they work.

All learning during the programme was related to the concrete problems of rural areas and their possible solutions. The raw material of learning was provided by the participants' actual experiences in the course of their work. This was achieved through case study presentations, field visits and analytical discussions.

The emphasis was on group-discussions rather than on lectures.

Attempts were made to create an atmosphere in which the participants would feel free to express themselves and be ready for frank reflection and analysis. In other words be prepared for an honest, even if painful process of self-searching, criticism and self-criticism.

It was attempted to turn the programme itself into a process of living together in a collective spirit.

An ongoing evaluation was built into the programme.

The main components of the training methodology were the following:

- Participation of trainees in planning and running the training
- Collective living
- Case study writing and presentation
- Field visits
- Group discussion

Details of how learning actually took place during these programmes are contained in two reports "Participatory Training for Development" and "Breaking Barriers: A South Asian Experience of Training for Participatory Development". These reports can be obtained from FFHC/AD, FAO, Rome.

33 | Criticism and Self-Criticism

kamla bhasin

I sent out invitations to summon guests.

I collected together all my friends.

Loud talk and simple feasting:

Discussion of philosophy, investigation of subtleties.

Tongues loosened, and minds at one.

Hearts refreshed by discharge of emotion.

SUI CH'ENG-KUNG

Various people all over the world in varying social, economic and political contexts are engaged in many kinds of development work. They may be members of a party, extension workers, activists; they may be professionals like doctors, engineers, lawyers, or they may be scientists and intellectuals in search of a 'barefoot' status for their skills, talents and activities. In a way all such people fit into the category of change agents—who may be described as individuals engaged in programmes at an individual, community or institutional level to usher in various forms of change in the society.

It is necessary for these change-agents who are quick to point out weaknesses in others, who readily prescribe changes for individual and community behaviour, to evaluate themselves, their behavior, their own value system from time to time. It is not seldom that change agents themselves become rigid, authoritarian and insensitive. They develop ways of work and behavioural patterns that are quite antithetical to the proclaimed philosophy of their work. There are community development organisations with hierarchical structures with completely centralised decision-making procedures, autocratic leadership, etc.

Since the world around the change agents is full of such contradictions there is little wonder that the change agents also repeatedly relapse into the same old patterns. Reflecting on her work a change agent from India wrote recently "There are weakness in my work. The major weakness is that I still have my middle class values". This point has been very well made by Liu Shao-ch'i in the Chinese context. Analysing the weaknesses in the party he writes "The reason for the weakness is very simple. It is that our Party is not a party that has fallen from the heavens; it is a party that has grown out of the existing Chinese society. Although in general our party members are relatively the best Chinese men and women, the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat, they come, however, from every stratum of Chinese society and are still living in this society which is replete with the influences of the exploiters—selfishness, intrigues, bureaucracy and every kind of filthy thing. Is

it anything strange that there are muddy stains on a person who crawls out of the mud and who constantly dabbles in the mud?"
that there are muddy stains on a person who crawls out of the mud and who constantly dabbles in the mud?"

Inspite of the 'mud' all around for their work to progress in a meaningful way so that it remains valid and credible the change agents must constantly try to critically view their own methods of work, the impact of their work etc. Before the change agents change others they have to change themselves and their own consciousness. They have to constantly try to shed their own contradictions, weaknesses, prejudices. In any organisation or group which is engaged in rural development, it is essential to have regular sessions of criticism and self-criticism. Only through such sessions can a genuine understanding of each other and of the work one is doing emerge. A thorough understanding of each other and sharing a common value system and an appropriate philosophy of work is the basis for strong team work.

Self-criticism is best done in a team because all of us are good at self-justification and self-deception. As Felix Green writes in his book 'The Enemy' "The human mind is extraordinarily adept at concealing and rationalizing its true motives so that almost every act we perform is thought (by ourselves) to be both sensible and morally unassailable.....The processes of self-deception are enormously subtle." (p. 309)

Since very few of us regularly practice self-criticism, we tend to be afraid of it, we tend to shun all criticism, specially criticism in a group. What Felix Green says about some change-agents in America seems to be true also of change-agents in Asia-since many of us have gone through similar education systems, "To our western minds, to be asked to expose our inner thoughts and motives to the scrutiny of others appears a grotesque proceeding and a horrible invasion of our privacy. The very thought of it fills us with embarrassment and scorn.... Especially to an intellectual; for he may discover the extent to which he has developed his intellectual attainments to gain status, admiration, a comfortable job, security, authority over others, self-esteem. So protective of its individual self is the conditioned mind that it cannot conceive of 'mutual-criticism' being a form of mutual help". But those who understand that to change the outside world is impossible unless one also changes oneself, anything which helps them to do this is welcome. Once a group of people working together begin to see that this conditioning is common to them all (and they all make mistakes) then they will be as anxious to help each other as they would be to help each other overcome a physical deformity. It is extremely difficult to see in oneself the many subtle and still unconscious attitudes which are hang-overs from the past, while others can often see them clearly enough. So mutual 'criticism'- which sounds to us so harsh and unfriendly a word is seen not at all as 'criticism' in our sense, but as a very important tool with which to untie old mental bonds. And who would not want to be released once he recognises that he is bound? It is this initial step-the recognition that we are bound-that is the first and most difficult hurdle of all. Through this process and the breaking down of all pretence comes a sense of shared experience, a mutual affection that we, who remain isolated and protective behind our 'individuality' can never know". (Felix Green "The Enemy" page 311).

Change agents need to free themselves also from 'self-defensiveness'. Because "Once he is ready to examine himself without defending or blaming himself, but to KNOW himself, he will no longer be content to play at life; he will demand clarity and unity. He will no longer be able to live in conformity either with the hypocracies of the existing order or with those in his own behavior". (ibid page 311-312).

All of us are bound not only by our old ideas and actions but also by the language we use. Most people when talking about anything in general continue to use the words 'man', 'he', 'himself' without realizing that these words exclude half of humanity, the women of this world. The use of such words was probably correct in a time and age when women did not participate in public or political life, but today when there are women in all walks of life, this usage is wrong. Even Felix Green while talking about people who would usher in a new era and a better society, only talks of 'men', 'he' etc. In the above quotes also he uses only masculine pronouns. As if there are no women involved in the whole process of change:

After change agents sort out things among themselves, rectify their mistakes pointed out to them by their colleagues, the next step will be to take into account and be subjected to the views, comments, and criticism of the community members. Because ultimately it will have to be the people whom the change agents claim to serve who will judge their work, their style of functioning their behavior etc. It is they who know best about the relevance of work at their level. The opinions village people have to change agents are ultimately the most important opinions.

Change agents among themselves might be convivial, friendly and kind to each other. While talking about each other's work and performance, they might keep 'scratching each other's backs' by complimenting one another.

But it is the people who can tell them whether they are condescending and paternalistic in their attitudes towards them; whether they are too ready to talk-not ready to listen, too ready to teach not ready to learn, too ready to advise not ready to consult etc.

Usually the careers and the promotions of village level workers have depended on what their superiors thought of them. Their work has been judged on the basis of the report their bosses wrote. If the boss was pleased all was well. The main concentration has been on keeping the bosses pleased. This is done in various ways; by subordinates having to please their bosses by running errands for them and their families or by other kinds of favours every now and then. Officers who go to villages on 'inspection' (it is not 'guidance', 'suggestion' but 'inspection'. This word sums up in a way the relationship between the boss and the subordinate) expect to be not only properly fed and taken care of, but also expect to be presented with whatever is locally produced at that particular time-fruits, butter, grain etc.

Since the subordinates have to please their bosses by giving such presents they obviously in turn expect the villagers to 'take care' of them. Ultimately it is the villagers who are fleeced in one way or the other, by one level of officials or another.

If the peasants were to judge the performance of the change agents, if the promotion of these people depended on reports written by the village people, none of these corrupt practices could go on. If the people were the masters of these 'public servants' one could expect the public servants to actually serve the people-and not otherwise as is so often the case.

If governments and other development agencies are sincere in using the words 'people's participation in development', then they will have to revolutionize their attitudes towards the masses and towards their own institutional structures. Without these fundamental changes the talk of people's participation will remain hollow.

Need for Study and Self Improvement

Criticism and self criticism is a form of corrective, used in order to improve personal behavior, individual character as well as to strengthen the organisation or the group in which one is working so that the work progresses better. Criticism and self-criticism is, however, only one side of the picture. The other side is, gaining further knowledge by study. All change agents who are trying to change others have to constantly change and improve themselves; all educators have to be constantly educated. Change agents are not people who have finished their own learning process. (Many of them behave as if that is the case). They cannot only draw on the reserves of knowledge and experience, which they have accumulated in the past. Past reserves are not inexhaustible. They have to constantly add to their own knowledge and understanding by further study to keep in touch with new ideas. The 'output' of a change-agent depends on the 'input' into the change agent of new ideas, knowledge, how-how etc.

On the basis of my experience I can say that unfortunately this further study aspect is also neglected by most village level workers. The top people in development organisations, in government departments do engage in study, they do keep abreast of the latest thinking but not the people who are actually working in the field. The top people seldom have the time to give the benefit of their reading and their knowledge to their field staff. Infact they (the village level workers) are sometimes not even given basic reading material before they start work. They are not adequately acquainted with the philosophy of work of the organisation, the need for such work etc.

All members of an organisation do not share a common philosophy of work, a common analysis of rural poverty, socio-economic, political conditions, etc. The workers are told how to do the work, how to fill in forms, how to meet people but they are not encouraged to participate in discussions about the basic questions. Why are people poor? Why is there a need to start a process of change? Why is there a tendency for the rich to become richer and poor to become poorer. All these vital questions are either not discussed at all or are only inadequately discussed. Sometimes these matters are purposely not discussed as these are 'sensitive' issues and one does not want to open the 'can of worms'. At other times the routine work becomes so important and oppressive that there is no time for these discussions. The day to day work becomes more important than the direction in which it is going.

Such vital issues as direction and orientation of the work of an organisation, evaluation of the impact of programmes are usually considered only as routine exercises in a cursory way a few times a year and that too only by the top people who are often too high to know what is actually happening down there. Field level workers are seldom involved in these discussions, partly because they have not been trained to take part in discussions and partly because the top people do not want the truth to be bared.

It is therefore essential that group-study be emphasized in development organisations to constantly improve the understanding of basic problems as well as to evolve a common philosophy of work. The practice has to be backed up by theory, and theory needs to be purified, improved, understood through practice. It is not enough if some people in the organisation master theory and others master practice. Such division of labour might prove counter-productive. The team has to think together, grow together and feel together. Group study will further the unity of the group. Unity is the basis and strength for effective rural development work.

The Chinese leaders have emphasized criticism and self-criticism among the cadres and 'learning from the masses' almost to the point of being repetitive. From what one reads about China one learns that the Chinese tried seriously to practice criticism and self-criticism. This is mentioned in almost all the books I have read about China. What follows is a sort of compendium of the ideas and experiences in China on the subject of criticism, self-criticism, group discussion and group study. We might be able to draw some useful lessons from the Chinese experience.

The Chinese leaders emphasized that there is a need to practice criticism and mutual criticism and to organise study groups at every level of work and society in China. All kinds of cadre and also the masses were encouraged to join small groups to practice mutual criticism and to study and discuss all aspects of their work and life.

Group dynamics has also been practiced and experimented with in many other countries, specially in the United States of America. Thousands of small groups have been formed to reflect on interpersonal relationships to practice criticism and mutual criticism. The broad principles of group dynamics are probably the same but what is different about the Chinese experiments in this field are that there the state has been supporting, encouraging and even to some extent forcing it and secondly in China this method has been widely practiced in the rural areas also. It is because of the latter that it might be interesting for us to study about the theory and practice of criticism and mutual criticism in China.

The Chinese leadership aimed to mobilize the whole population and for that, group discussion and political study was essential. Criticism and mutual criticism was seen by Mao as a weapon for strengthening the Party organisation and increasing its fighting capacity. Mutual criticism according to him is a method, infact the only method to resolve contradictions among the people.

Mao wanted to extend the use of this method "through out the ranks of the people, we want all our factories, cooperatives, business establishments, schools, government offices, public bodies, in a word all the eight hundred million of our people to use it in resolving contradictions among themselves".

Else where Mao compares this method of mutual criticism to a kind of 'duster' "Conscientious practice of self-criticism is still another hallmark distinguishing our Party from all other political parties. As we say, dust will accumulate if a room is not cleaned regularly, our faces will get dirty if they are not washed regularly. Our comrades' minds and our Party's work may also collect dust, and also need sweeping and washing. The proverb "Running water is never stale and a door-hinge is never worm-eaten" means that constant motion prevents the inroads of germs and other organisms. To check up regularly on our work and in the process develop a democratic style of work, to fear neither criticism nor self-criticism, and to apply such good popular Chinese maxims as "Say all you know and say it without reserve", "Blame not the speaker but be warned by his words" and "Correct mistakes if you have committed them and guard against them if you have not"-this is the only effective way to prevent all kinds of political dust and germs from contaminating the minds of our comrades and the body of our Party. ("On Coalition Government" April 24, 1945, Selected Works, Vol.III pp.316-17).

Unity Criticism-Unity

The formula of mutual criticism according Mao is unity-criticism-unity. "i.e. taking the desire for unity as a starting point, passing through criticism or struggle, distinguishing between right and wrong, and reaching a new unity on a new basis" (Mao)

"The idea was for a group to start with a certain degree of unity and mutual respect, but with various defects in the thinking and behavior of members. This unity would be disrupted as unanimous criticism of these defects became the centre of group life. As those criticized acknowledged their defects and resolved to change their ways, unity was restored, but at a higher level (i.e. with the defects corrected) only if criticism was properly balanced with group solidarity could it be effective in changing the attitudes of members. (Whyte "Small Groups and Political Rituals in China" p.49).

Mutual criticism was an important method used in China to change the attitudes of people. It was thus extremely important that both method of mutual criticism and the atmosphere surrounding it be correct. The prescribed atmosphere for mutual criticism was "a happy and strict atmosphere" an atmosphere "of solidarity but not of harmony". A new kind of unity was to develop, one based on rigorous group criticism rather than on the smoothing over of conflict in order to preserve harmony. Relentless and merciless criticism leading to alienation of members was discouraged. Solidarity and criticism were to be combined, with criticism leading not to disharmony but to improved unity.

On the same theme Mao said "If we take our desire for unity as our starting-point and adopt a helpful attitude, then sharp criticism cannot split the Party, it can only unite the Party. It is very dangerous to, leave unsaid, things you want to say."

'Learn from Past Mistakes to Avoid Future Ones'

Through the method of mutual criticism people were to learn from their past mistakes. 'The mistakes of the past must be exposed without sparing anyone's sensibilities; it is necessary to analyze and criticize what was bad in the past with a scientific attitude so that work in the future will be done more carefully and done better.'

Criticism was to be a guide for future action and that is why it had to be positive, constructive and forward looking. Criticism was to be on major issues rather than on minor points. Main task of criticism is to point out political and organisational mistakes. "As to personal shortcomings, unless they are related to political and organizational mistakes, there is no need to be overcritical" (Mao)

It was pointed out that while in practising criticism "One should guard against subjectivism, arbitrariness and the vulgarization of criticism: statements should be based on facts and criticism should stress the political side". (Mao).

"Cure the Sickness to Save the Patient"

The Chinese leadership wanted mutual criticism to be means of solving the problems. According to Mao "Our aim in exposing errors and criticizing shortcomings, like that of a doctor curing a sickness, is solely to save the patient and not to doctor him to death. A person with appendicitis is saved when the doctor removes the appendix. So long as a person who has made mistakes does not hide his sickness for fear of treatment or persists in his mistakes until he is beyond cure, so long

as he honestly and sincerely wishes to be cured and to mend his ways, we should welcome him and cure his sickness so that he can become a good comrade. We can never succeed if we let ourselves go and laugh at him. In treating an ideological or a political malady, one must never be rough and rash but must adopt the approach of 'curing the sickness to save the patient, which is the only correct and effective method'.

In some pamphlets written on the subject of criticism and mutual criticism it was emphasized that criticism should be accompanied by efforts to look for the source of deviant views and to help the recipient find ways to correct his error. Criticism should be accompanied by moderating praise in order not to devastate its target. The recipient of criticism was asked to realize that his critics were really trying to help him. He should think over their criticisms and engage in thoughtful self-criticism. He should refute criticism he felt was unfair, or incorrect, but in these pamphlets the better attitude was for the target of criticism to resolve "to change my ways if criticism is correct, and to avoid that error in the future if it is incorrect." It was also stated that the individual should be more critical of himself than of others, and he should not wait for others to criticize him before pointing out his own failings to the group. He should realize that admitting errors is not condemning oneself totally, and that by such an admission he can rid himself of an emotional burden and can begin to progress ideologically. The leaders of small groups and activists in these groups had the responsibility of setting in motion the process of mutual criticism. As Whyte points out (page 48) "The hsiao-tsu head bore the main responsibility for developing proper mutual criticism. It was advised that he should not take the lead in criticizing others; rather he should set an example by engaging in thorough and sincere self-criticism. As with the problem of developing discussion, the hsiao-tsu head should use a variety of tactics in the effort to get everyone participating in mutual criticism fairly equally. Activists should be encouraged to engage enthusiastically in criticism and self-criticism, but not be overly critical or monopolize the floor. Reluctant group members could be the target of individual talks outside the meetings, and of course they could also be criticized publicly for not engaging in criticism!"

Resistance to Mutual Criticism

Why the Chinese leaders emphasized mutual criticism repeatedly and why they went into such details while suggesting how to conduct mutual criticism is probably because they knew mutual criticism is alien to Chinese tradition. They expected the attitudes of resistance to mutual participation to be formidable. There were all kinds of deviations from the defined norms of mutual criticism. Mao Tse-tung speaks about these deviations in his speech on 'In Opposition to Liberalism'. Whyte has summarised this speech thus "Some individuals were reluctant to criticize their friends or their kin, and others resisted criticizing anyone for fear of retaliation in the future. Some people simply liked to say nice things and be polite to everyone. While others were unconcerned about whether their peers harbored improper attitudes. Some were willing to criticize others but resisted self-criticism, finding excuses for their own shortcomings. Some individuals harbored grudges against those who had criticized them. Others developed skills in self-criticism which made them appear very repentant about their errors, but in practice their behavior did not change at all. On the other hand, there were those who loved to criticize others, who could see only defects and no merits in those around them, and who were skilled at using ideological jargon to magnify the errors of their peers out of all proportion. In some cases personal animosities and grudges were vented in meetings under the guise of principled criticism, and at times criticism was reinforced by gossip and rumors spread outside of meetings". (p.47)

Mutual Criticism has to be Learned

William Hinton, the author of the famous book FANSHEN sat through some sessions of mutual criticism among the cadre, which he described in some detail in his book. These were long meetings, he writes, which went on sometimes for days on end. There were both tensions and moments of relief. The progress was slow but it was there. Describing one such meeting William Hinton writes "What made self-revelation possible for the work team members that day was the deep commitment everyone of them had to the success of the land reform movement. They freely examined themselves and their comrades, not for partisan advantage, not for the sake of exposure, not as an exercise in 'mea culpa', but in order to remove obstacles in the way of more effective work. This was the objective frame-work around which the unfolding of the subjective attitudes revolved. And this, not coercion, not curiosity, not some narcissistic self-torture, made self-and mutual criticism viable and grounded it in necessity" (Fanshen p. 459)

William Hinton writes further "My own reaction/to the Party Day meeting was one of wonder-wonder at the perseverance of these people, especially the perseverance of the local men.----I wondered also at the new level of tolerance and understanding attained by the whole group through the method of self-and-mutual criticism. The method, I began to realize, was something that had to be learned. It did not flow naturally out of the extremely individualistic, face-conscious culture in which the majority of the team members had been reared.

"To practice self-and-mutual-criticism well one had to cultivate objectivity in several ways. First, one had to be willing to be objective about oneself. One had to be willing to seek out that kernel of truth in any criticism regard less of the manner in which it was presented. Second, one had to be objective about others; one had to evaluate others from a principled point of view, with the object of helping them to overcome their faults and work more effectively. One had to raise others up, not knock them down. In practice these two considerations meant that one had to pay great attention to one's own motives and methods when criticizing others, while disregarding in the main the motives and methods used by others towards oneself.

Above and beyond this, one had to cultivate the courage to voice sincerely held opinions regardless of the views held by others, while at the sametime showing a willingness to listen to others and to change one's own opinion when honestly convinced of error.

To bow with the wind, to go along with the crowd was an irresponsible attitude that could never lead to anything but trouble for oneself, for the revolutionary movement, and for China. The reverse of this, to be arrogant and unbending was just as bad". (Fanshen p. 467)

There were of course mistakes made all along the way. But these mistakes according to Hinton were "not something inherent in the method but a consequence of its unskilled application. They were a consequence of the low level of political understanding of most of the participants. As their understanding and experience increased their objectivity could well increase, and the method thus served more effectively to unite the whole village for the future". (Fanshen p. 468)

Toughen your Scalps and Listen

Criticism-and-mutual criticism was to take place not only among cadres, and in small groups but also vertically-i.e. the cadre and the Party member had to face the criticism of the masses. The masses were

given an opportunity to speak-up to criticize openly the cadre and the Party members. Mao told the cadre to encourage masses to criticize them "We must conscientiously bring out questions into the open, and let the masses speak out. Even at the risk of being cursed we should still let them speak out. The result of their curses at the worse will be that we are thrown out and cannot go on doing this kind of work-demoted or transferred. What is so impossible about that? Why should a person only go up and never go down?" ("Mao Unrehearsed" Edited by Stuart Schram p.160).

In another speech Mao told the cadres "I would advise comrades, since people have mouths let them talk. You must listen to the other person's point of view. --One should get into the habit of listening. I say we should toughen our scalps and listen. At the worst they will curse three generations of your ancestors..." (Mao Unrehearsed p.137).

Gate—You All have to go Through Them

The open criticism sessions in the villages were called Gate. Everyone in the village had to pass the gate, i.e. had to be judged by the other members of the group, the village. William Hinton describes a special Gate for Party purification. In this particular Gate the people of Long Bow village (where William Hinton stayed for sometime) were to pass their judgement on Party members. About the outcome and significance of this Gate he writes "All the members of the team felt that the intangible results were far more important. They saw the gate as a turning-point in the political future of the people. It had already created a new climate of opinion, a new political atmosphere, a new relationship between the Communist Party and the people, and a new relationship between the people and the Border Region government. These changes were profoundly democratic. They transformed 'supervision by the people' from a slogan into a reality and effectively drew people, whom the land distribution had made equal economically, into activity that enabled them to project this equality into the political sphere.

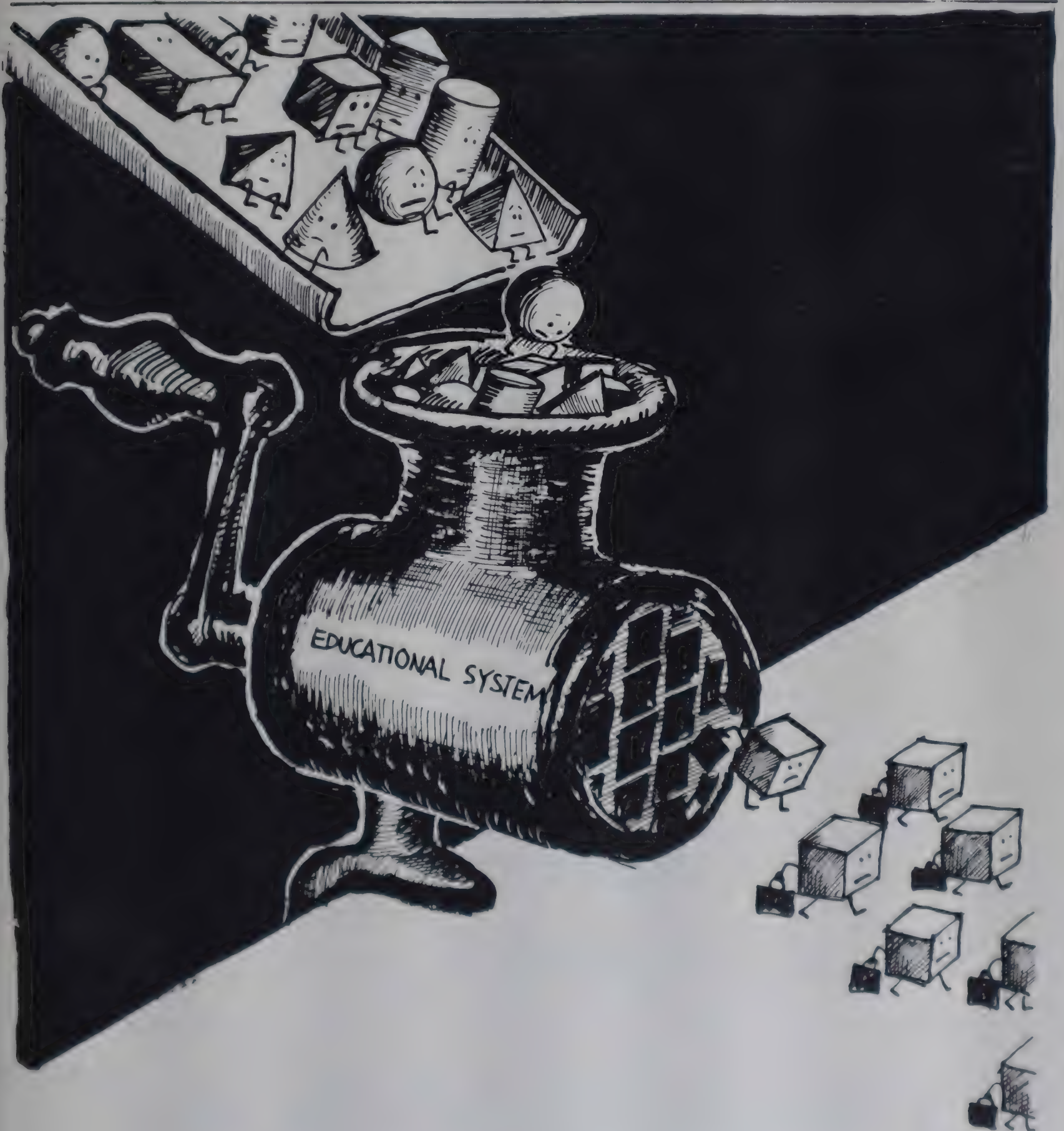
The most important result of the whole campaign was certainly this drawing into meaningful action of hundreds of peasants who, because of various inhibitions and fears, had remained passive throughout the revolutionary years, or had lapsed back into passivity once the big struggle against the landlords had been victoriously concluded. The campaign to purify the party made clear to all participants that the people were responsible, and that they could and must decide their own future.

Almost equal in importance to the changes wrought by the campaign in the consciousness of the peasants were the changes it wrought in the consciousness of the Communists. In the agony of public self-examination, they were forced to face up to their weaknesses, to ask themselves fundamental questions concerning their character and their intentions, and to make important decisions about the future. Under fire for every lapse, every weakness, they began to catch a glimpse of the Revolution as 'the hundred-year great task' that Chairman Mao had so often called it, rather than a great upheaval impetuously entered into and soon completed. 'Service to the people' assumed new and demanding dimensions". (Fanshen p. 430)

Conclusion

It is important that change agents reflect on their work, their behavior, constantly, they add to their own reservoir of knowledge all the time, in order to avoid stagnation and rigidities of opinion and behavior. Such reflection and study is best done in a group. In many countries various groups have been experimenting with small groups, mutual criticism sessions etc. It might be useful to look at the experiences of others and learn from them if these experiences appear to be relevant to one's own situation. It is not at all easy to practice these ideas but.

EVEN THE LONGEST JOURNEY BEGINS WITH THE FIRST STEP.



34 | Education or Manipulation

vinoba bhave

As soon as the pupil begins to feel: "Now I am learning", something is wrong with the educational machinery. The best form of physical training and development of the body for little children is play. The child himself never feels: "Now I am training my body." While he is playing the outside world does not exist for him. Children at play are absorbed in one undivided experience. They are not aware of comfort or discomfort, they feel neither hunger nor thirst, neither pain nor weariness. For them play is a joy, not duty; it is pleasure, not physical training. This principle has to be applied to all kinds of learning. Instead of the artificial idea that education is a duty, we must foster the natural and inspiring idea that education is a joy.

Those seers who were gifted with the deepest insight made it abundantly clear that they did not know how education is given. As is said in the Kena Upanishad. "He knows who says:- we do not know." Method, syllabus, time-table-these are all meaningless words. They are nothing but self-deception. Education is to be had only from living deeds. When some separate activity, unconnected with the work of life, is given the name of education, this 'education' has a poisonous and unhealthy influence on the mind, just as some foreign substance entering the body usually has evil consequences. Unless we are exercised in work we have no hunger for learning, and when learning is forced artificially upon a man who has no appetite for it, the digestive organs have no power to digest it. If wisdom were to be had by cramming books, the library cupboards would be wise indeed. But learning which is forcibly crammed in is not digested. Mental dysentery sets in and the intellectual powers are atrophied and die. Let us therefore define education as 'that which without method, builds itself up into a methodical and ordered whole, that which no guru can give and which nevertheless is given.' The sun itself gives its light to no-one, yet all, in the most natural and easy way, receive its light. Anything which is cut off from life loses its power to teach.

Teaching must take place in the context of real life. Set the children to work in the fields, and when a problem arises there give them whatever knowledge of cosmogony, or physics, or any other science, is needed to solve it. Set them to cook a meal, and as need arises teach them chemistry. In one word, let them live. The children should have someone with them, but that someone should not belong to a special category called teacher, he should be a man living an ordinary life in the practical world. The man who is to guide children should conduct his life intelligently and be capable of explaining the processes of life and work to the children as opportunity arises. It is not education to fill students' heads with information, but to arouse their thirst for knowledge. Teacher and pupil both learn by their contact with each other. Both are students. True education is that which is experienced, tasted and digested. What can be counted and recorded is not education. Education cannot

be doled out; it cannot be weighed and measured.

In the Upanishads, the praises of ignorance are sung side by side with the praises of knowledge. Man needs not only knowledge but ignorance too. Knowledge alone, or ignorance alone, leads him into darkness. But the union of fitting knowledge with fitting ignorance is the nectar of eternity. The world is so filled with the matter of knowledge that men would go mad if they were to attempt to cram all of it into their heads. The ability to forget is just as necessary to us as the ability to remember.

Self-Reliance

Education must be of such a quality that it will train students in intellectual self-reliance and make them independent thinkers. If this were to become the chief aim of learning, the whole process of learning would be transformed. Life-knowledge can only be had from life. The task of the school is to awaken in its pupils the power to learn from life.

The purpose of learning is freedom. Freedom implies not only independence of other people but also independence of one's own moods and impulses. The man who is a slave to his senses and cannot keep his impulses under control is neither free nor self-sufficient. The question "What shall we teach our students?" is raised in the Upanishads, and the answer given is that we should teach them "the Veda of Vedas." That is to say, the power to study the Vedas, and everything else for themselves. We have to put into their hands the key to knowledge.

On the completion of his education a student ought to have confidence in his own powers. This is what matters, not a supply of miscellaneous information and a degree.

The goal of education must be freedom from fear. In the Upanishads, when the guru is teaching his disciples he says to them: 'O my students, whatever good conduct you find in me, that follow; whatever you do not find to be good, that do not follow'. That is to say, the guru gives his students freedom. He tells them to use their own judgement in deciding what is right and what is wrong. They are not to think that whatever their guru says is wholly right. It is certainly true that the guru is endeavouring to live by the truth, otherwise he would not be guru; but he nevertheless cannot claim that his every action will be in harmony with truth. And so he tells his students to be alert, to use their intelligence and examine his conduct, and to disregard whatever seems to them wrong. And by this means he enables his students to grow in fearlessness.

Fearlessness means that we should neither fear anything, nor inflict fear on others. Both these things are parts of fearlessness. A tiger cannot be called fearless; it may not be afraid of any other animal, but it is afraid of a gun, and it also inspires fear in other creatures. True fearlessness neither enslaves another, nor does it slavishly submit to another.

The only sufficient basis for such fearlessness is the knowledge of the self. This self-knowledge is the foundation of education.

No Knowledge without Action

The fountainhead of all the world's conflicts is that knowledge has been separated from action. There is no knowledge without action and no action without knowledge. The two are one, this is not a question of technique, but is a fundamental principle of Basic Education. People

ask - if children have to work for two or three hours every day, how are they to learn anything? It seems to me an extraordinary question. What we should really be asking is how they are ever going to learn anything if they spend three or four hours a day poring over books. It is amazing to think what three or four hours of reading really means. In three hours a boy might read sixty or seventy pages of a book but does he really learn anything? The muscles of his eyes no doubt get some exercise. We never seem to have any doubt that by reading he is obtaining knowledge, and that reading is in fact the direct road to knowledge. It is nothing of the sort; on the contrary, book-learning is like a curtain that shuts us off from the real world.

There is a book called 'The ABC of Bee-keeping', in which every possible piece of information about bee-keeping is to be found. Having read it I thought: "Now we can do something; let us get hold of some bees." But I did not get them without many days of running around, and when I had got them, it took two full months more to win their confidence. Everything was written in the book and the book was certainly of some help, but the main road to knowledge is direct action. Reading and study are supplementary to action, they are tools. It is like saying "That man has no spectacles, how can he see?" The eyes, not the spectacles, are the organ of sight; if the eyes are weak, spectacles can certainly assist them.

The separation of learning from labour results also in social injustice. Some people do nothing but study and others nothing but hard labour, and as a result society is split in two. Those who earn their bread by manual labour form one social class and those who do only intellectual work form another. In India, manual labourers are paid one rupee a day, intellectual workers are paid twenty-five or thirty rupees. A very great injustice has been done by rating the value of manual and intellectual work so differently. And it is the abolition of such injustice that must be the goal of our education.

Human lives are like trees, which cannot live if they are cut off from the soil which nourishes them. Therefore, everyone must have the opportunity to tend the soil, but at the same time the business of agriculture must be done so efficiently that the smallest possible number of people are tied entirely to the land. These two principles may seem to be mutually contradictory, but they are both parts of Basic Education. It is a basic need of humanity to be in touch with the earth, and any nation or civilisation which is cut off from it slowly but surely loses its vigour and degenerates.

If a man's house is full of medicine bottles, we infer that the man is probably ill. But if his house is full of books, we conclude that he is intelligent. Surely that is not right? The first rule of health is to take medicine only when it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, the first rule of intelligence ought to be to avoid, so far as possible, burying one's eyes in books. We consider medicine bottles to be the sign of a sick body; we ought to consider books, whether secular or religious, as the sign of a sick mind!

Student Teacher Comradeship

An interesting light is cast on the Indian attitude to education by the fact that in all the fourteen languages of India there is no root word corresponding to English 'teach'. We can learn, we can help others to learn, but we cannot 'teach'. The use of the two distinct words, 'teach' and 'learn', suggests that these two processes may be thought of as independent of one another. But that is merely the professional vanity of the 'teacher', and we shall not understand the nature of education unless we rid ourselves of that vanity. Our first task is to

realise that an 'uneducated' human being is nowhere to be found. But today, all too often, an ordinary school-boy treats a first-class carpenter as if he were an ignorant boor. The carpenter may be a man of maturity and experience, a wise and skilled workman, who is of real service to his community. But simply because he cannot read and write, the 'educated' boy treats him as an inferior.

The gift of education is not a matter for pride, in fact an essential condition for being able to receive it is that we should grow in humanity. In our ancient books vidya (education) is equated with vinaya (humility); vinaya, in Sanskrit, is a synonym for education, and a student who had completed his studies was called vinit - perfected in humility. This humility is the fruit of true education. The teacher must be ready at all times to serve his students in humility; the students must learn humbly from the teacher. Teacher and student must each regard the other as a fellow worker; in former times they united in the ancient prayer of the schools - 'May the study of both of us be filled with vigour.' The teacher does not consider himself to be 'teaching', but to be studying. The prayer asserts that both live together and both study together. They both understand that the teacher finds his own true good in helping the student, and the student in helping the teacher.

Wherever two people live together in this kind of comradeship, giving and receiving mutual help, there real education is in progress. The place of books is, therefore, secondary. This idea troubles many people, who think that if the place assigned to books is reduced the students will be deprived of the most valuable tools of knowledge. Books do have a place as tools of knowledge, but it is a very minor place. The major need is for teacher and student to become work-partners, and this can happen only when the distinction between the teacher 'teaching' and the student 'learning' can be overcome.

Education is like the water in a river - what is here today is not what was here yesterday, and what is here today will not be here tomorrow. The river goes on flowing but its water is never the same. In the same way education should go on changing continually, with the experience of every passing day.

Each region is different, and plans for education must take account of those differences. Education will take one form in a town on a river bank, another in a town on a hill, another in a town near a forest. It must vary with the circumstances. The same fixed mould, the same set of text-books, will not be equally suitable everywhere. When there is just one text-book for the whole State no attention can be paid to these local features and variations; in consequence the student's interest is not met. Teaching ought to fit the situation. We eat today to satisfy today's hunger; we do not eat for ten days ahead; similarly the student should be given the knowledge that is needed to satisfy the demands of his life today.

"Only Teaching"

A young man said that he wished to do some good work for society. "Tell me", I said, "what kind of work do you feel you could do well?" "Only teaching, I think", replied the young man, "I can't do anything else, I can only teach, but I am interested in it and I feel sure I shall be able to do it well." "Yes, yes, I do not doubt that, but what are you going to teach? Spinning? Carding? Weaving? Could you teach any of these?" "No, I can't teach these." "Then tailoring? or dyeing? or carpentry?" "No, I know nothing about them." "Perhaps you could teach cooking, grinding and other household skills?" "No, I have never done any work

like that. I can only teach..." "My dear friend, you answer 'No' to every question, and yet you keep saying you can only teach. What do you mean? Can you teach gardening?" The would-be teacher said, rather angrily, "Why do you ask all this? I told you at the beginning, I can do nothing else. I can teach literature." "Good! Good! I'm beginning to understand now. You mean you can teach people to write books like Tagore and Shakespeare?" This made the young man so angry that he began to splutter. "Take it easy", I laughed. "Can you teach patience?" That was too much. "I know what you mean", I said, "You can teach reading, writing, history and geography. Well, they are not entirely useless, there are times in life when they are needed. But they are not basic to life. Would you be willing to learn weaving?" "I don't want to learn anything now. Besides I couldn't learn to weave, I have never before done any kind of handwork." "In that case it might of course take you longer to learn, but why should you be unable to learn it?" "I don't think I could ever learn it. But even supposing I could, it would mean a lot of hard work and a great deal of trouble. So please understand that I could not undertake it." This conversation is quite enough to enable us to understand the psychology and characteristics of far too many of our 'teachers'. To be 'only a teacher' means to be: completely ignorant of any kind of practical skill which might be useful in real life; incapable of learning anything new and indifferent towards any kind of craftsmanship; conceited; and buried in books.

'Only Teaching' Means Being a Corpse Cut off from Life

It is important to make our own lives a pattern of what the life of society ought to be. If a man can really fulfil his own life, the radiance of education will stream out of itself upon everyone around him, and the atmosphere of the whole neighbourhood will feel its influence. A teacher like this is a school in himself, and to live with him is real education.

The teacher in the school should be the inspiration of the whole town, and the school should be the centre of service. If the community needs medicine, it should be supplied through the school. If the streets need cleaning, the school should initiate the work. The people should make plans for the observance of festivals. In this way the school should become the centre of the community; it should develop whatever is of value and introduce the things that are lacking.

There is nothing more tragic than that knowledge should be paid for in money. A man who possesses knowledge hungers and thirsts to pass it on to others and see them enjoy it. The child at the breast finds satisfaction, but the mother too takes pleasure in giving suck. What would become of the world if mothers began demanding fees for feeding their babies?

If you ask someone what he is drinking he will answer 'tea'. There is sugar in it, but he never mentions the sugar, he never says he is drinking tea-and-sugar. The sweetness of the sugar permeates the tea, but the man drinks and says nothing about it. Education must be like the sugar, doing its work in secret. The best education is similarly invisible. The more it is seen, the more imperfect it is.

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